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ABSTRACT

This book is designed for instructors and tutors working with female learners in literacy and English-as-an-additional language (EAL). It consists of a series of papers that explore some of the links among feminism, literacy, violence, and a women-centered curriculum while simultaneously presenting suggested activities, readings, and discussions to use with female learners. The following papers are included: "What Is a Feminist Curriculum?" (Kate Nonesuch); "Women at the Centre of the Curriculum" (Janet Isserlis); "Responding to Disclosures of Abuse in Women's Lives" (Jenny Horsman); "Daily Lives" (Janet Isserlis); "Exploring Learning and Identity" (Jenny Horsman); "Self-Esteem and Literacy" (Dorothee Komangapik); "Gender Roles" (Kate Nonesuch); "Cultural Awareness Activities" (Alice Li); "Role Models" (Evelyn Battell); "Women and Work" (Selvi Varathappan Dyck et al.); "Tools for Building Self-Esteem" (Francene Gillis); "Choosing Safer Sex" (Sue Mendel); "Songs about Women's Issues" (Dharini Abeysekera); "Poetry by Canadian Women" (Helen Winton); "Women's Ways of Learning" (Linda Shohet); and "Women of Courage: Herstory" (Anne Moore and Women's Group of Action Read). The book contains a 184-item bibliography of print and media resources. (MN)

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Making Connections

Literacy and EAL Curriculum from a Feminist Perspective

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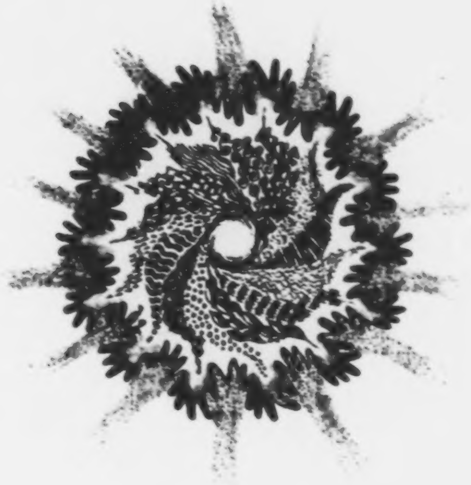
Making Connections



Literacy and EAL Curriculum from a Feminist Perspective

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Table of Contents

Introduction

What Do I Need to Know about This Book? 1

How This Book Came to Be 3

What is a Feminist Curriculum?
by Kate Nonesuch 9

Women at the Centre of the Curriculum
by Janet Isserlis 13

Responding to Disclosures of Abuse in Women's Lives
by Jenny Horsman 15

1.
Daily Lives
by Janet Isserlis 31

2.
Exploring Learning and Identity
by Jenny Horsman 63

3.
Self Esteem and Literacy
by Dorothee Komangapik 93

4.
Gender Roles
by Kate Nonesuch 113

5.
Cultural Awareness Activities
by Alice Li 133

6.
Role Models
by Evelyn Battell 161

7.
Women and Work
*by Selvi Varathappan Dyck, Evelyn Battell,
Janet Isserlis and Kate Nonesuch* 191

8.
Tools for Building Self-Esteem
by Francene Gillis 223

9.
Choosing Safer Sex
by Sue Mendel 245

10.
Songs about Women's Issues
by Dharini Abeysekera 275

11.
Poetry by Canadian Women
by Helen Winton 299

12.
Women's Ways of Learning
by Linda Shohet 329

13.
Women of Courage: Herstory
by Anne Moore and the Women's Group of Action Read 355

Bibliography 389

What Do I Need to Know about This Book?

Introduction section

The introductory section of this book is extensive; as well as giving you some background to the writing process, it explores some of the links among feminism, literacy, violence and women-centred curriculum.

Two kinds of text

After the introductory material, you will find there are two kinds of text in the chapters, each in a different type font. The main text, in this font, is a straightforward description of suggested activities, readings, discussions and so on to use with learners. Beside it you will find occasional comments, in this type font, in which the author "muses" on the work; for example, she may give a rationale for the activity, suggestions for further reading or comments from learners.

We have separated the two kinds of text so that when you take the book to class or to a tutoring session, you can find your way through the main text easily, without distractions; when you are reading it outside of class, we hope you find that the comments enrich the main text and put it into a context. Since that context may be like your teaching situation, or may be very different, the comments can help you adapt, expand or contract the activities to suit the learners you work with.

The Bibliography

The Bibliography begins on page 389. It includes complete listings of resources cited in the chapters, as well as ordering information for hard-to-find items.

The jagged heart

We use this icon to alert you to activities, readings and topics that might raise strong, perhaps painful, emotions. In the comments beside the jagged heart you will find an explanation, or an alternative activity that is less loaded, or a suggestion that will help you prepare for possible reactions. Particularly, the jagged heart often refers you to the introductory chapter, "Responding to Disclosure of Abuse in Women's Lives," by Jenny Horsman. We suggest you read it before you work with learners on any of the chapters in this book. We use this icon, not to scare you, but to make the curriculum easier to use. Think of it as a heart, because it deals with feelings, feelings that you want to treat tenderly, feelings that, by using the activities in this book, you encourage learners to show. Think of it also as a warning about an explosive device: pay attention to the comments beside it, listen to learners, go slow, and be prepared to stop or change direction as needed.

Cassette

A cassette tape comes with this book which has the songs used in two chapters, "Songs about Women's Issues" and "Women and Work."

Readings

At the end of each chapter we have collected all the poems, stories and songs suggested for learners. If you would like more copies of the readings, they are available from CCLOW (address below) as a separate package.

Exercises

You will also find exercises for the learners at the end of each chapter. These exercises may be photocopied for educational purposes.

Miniatures

Miniature versions of readings and exercises appear at appropriate places in each chapter. Their purpose is to show clearly what is needed for each section and to remind you of the content of the student material. We hope they will make your class preparation easier.

Overlaps

If you read the book from cover to cover, you will find similar material in several chapters. The same poet, and sometimes the same poem, for example, may show up in two or three chapters, and many chapters suggest that learners make collages or do a media analysis. Since it seems unlikely that anyone will do all of these chapters with any one group of learners, we have not tried to eliminate overlaps. If you are doing a chapter that asks your class to make collages similar to ones you have already done, bring out the old collages and look at them, using the focus of the new chapter as a starting point for discussion, before going on to the next activity.

Non-sexist language

We have tried to refer to "they" rather than "he" or "he or she" when talking generally about people. Occasionally we use "s/he" when it might equally refer to either sex and "she" when it is likely to be a woman. Sometimes you will see "their" instead of the awkward "his or hers," as, for example, "Ask each learner to read their story."

Braille edition

If you would like to convert this text into Braille, the disk is available from CCLOW at the address below.

Your comments

We would like to hear your experiences with and reflections on this curriculum.
Please write:

The Literacy Committee
Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW)
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How This Book Came to Be

THIS BOOK arose out of the ongoing work of the Literacy Committee of the CCLOW Board. In 1990 the Literacy Committee launched a project to search for Canadian women-positive literacy material and the publication *Telling Our Stories Our Way: A Guide to Good Canadian Material for Women Learning to Read* highlighted what they found.

Two projects which followed focused on women's experience in literacy programs – women who were learners, instructors, tutors and administrators of those programs. In *Discovering the Strength of Our Voices: Women and Literacy Programs* (1991) Betty-Ann Lloyd reported on her research into the effects of gender on women's experiences in literacy programs. Following this report, further research was carried out to explore the question, "What happens when literacy programs undertake woman-positive activities?" Across the country, women planned and carried out women-positive activities at the local level and documented the results. They formed women-only discussion and support groups; they organized learners to do a house-to-house survey to talk to other women about their needs; they produced reading material by and about women learners. *The Power of Woman-Positive Literacy Work*, by Betty-Ann Lloyd, Frances Ennis and Tannis Atkinson (1994) documents the results of those activities.

Two themes arose from that study that are directly relevant to the present project. One was a call from participants for curriculum material that would address the issues of women's lives. This book is a direct response to that call.

The other theme was the pervasiveness and magnitude of violence against women. The violence and the threat of violence that women face daily affect learners' ability to take part in literacy programs, and affect instructors' and tutors' personal lives as well as their ability to work in literacy programs. You will find that theme recurring throughout this book, as well as celebrations of the strengths and joys of women's lives.

The Curriculum Project

In 1993 the Literacy Committee of the CCLOW Board applied for a grant from the Secretary of State to produce a book of curriculum for women in literacy and English-as-an-additional-language (EAL) programs. When the funding became more certain, the committee put out a call for participants. This call was widely distributed across Canada, in literacy journals and newsletters, through the Feminist Literacy Workers Network and local literacy networks. The committee was interested in forming a group that would include:

- literacy workers from all over Canada, including First Nations women, women of colour and white women;
- a variety of programs – literacy, EAL, First Nations literacy – in a variety of settings – classrooms, one-on-one tutoring, institutional and community-based programs;
- women who had some perspective on working with women and women's learning;
- women currently working with one or more learners;
- women who were more and less experienced instructors and curriculum writers.

Women were asked to submit examples of curriculum or lesson plans that they had written. Thirty-eight women responded, and of these, fifteen were chosen to take part in the project.

Three members of the Literacy Committee, Evelyn Battell, Jenny Horsman and Linda Shohet, the latter also a member of the CCLOW Board, became part of the group in order to maintain a link with the Literacy Committee and the CCLOW Board. Aisla Thomson, then Executive-Director of CCLOW, worked with them in planning and executing the project.

The committee hired Elaine Gaber-Katz and Moon Joyce to facilitate group meetings, invited the group to an initial meeting in Banff and, at that point, turned the project over to the group.

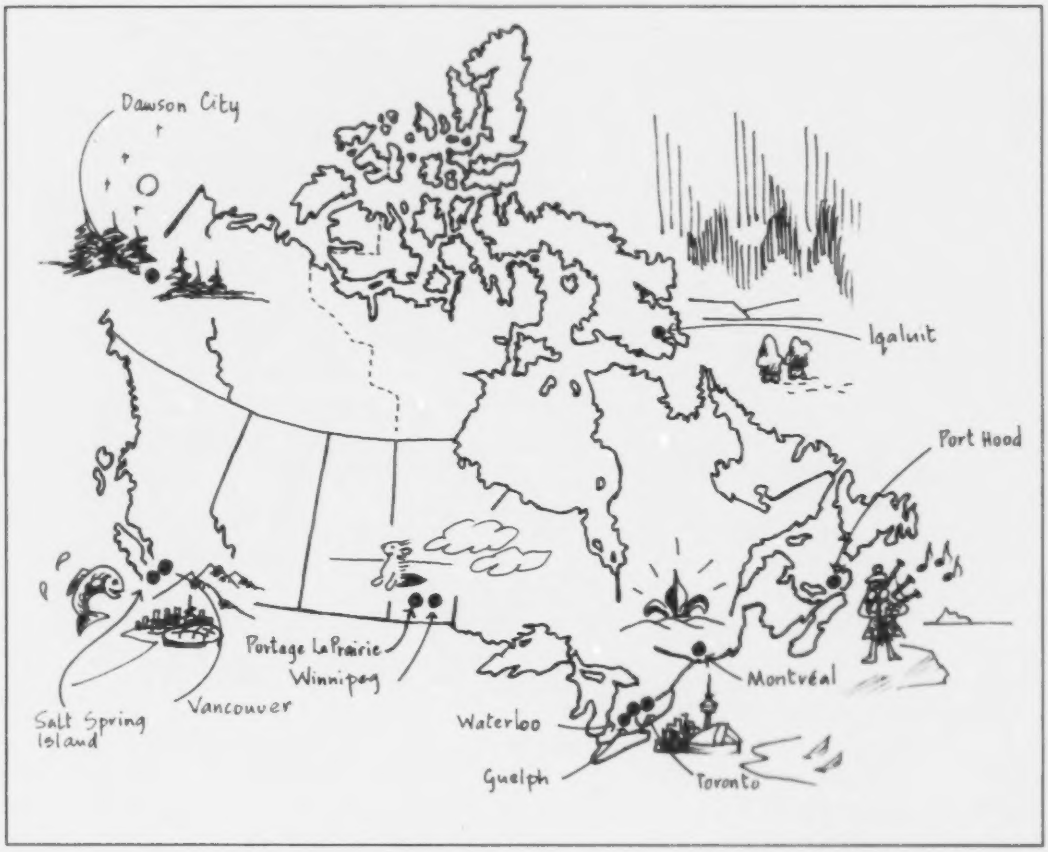


illustration: Moon Joyce

Our first meeting

We met at the Banff School of Fine Arts for two and a half days, in June 1994. There were the 15 members of the curriculum working group, the two facilitators and Aisla Thomson.

Some of us knew some of the other women in the group – the committee members obviously knew each other and Aisla, and some of us had been involved in the previous research project. Most of us knew no one else in the group. Moon taught us a Greek greeting dance, appropriately enough, since we had a lot of meeting and greeting to do. The music she brought, both the songs she sang for us and the songs she taught us, wove through our meetings.

Early in the first session, we were asked to invoke the name and presence of some woman from our lives who would sustain us in our work. That litany of names, mothers and grandmothers, mentors and friends, heroes both real and fictional, women alive and dead, immediately doubled our numbers and multiplied our strengths and abilities many times.

Each of us came with a variety of hopes and fears, as these excerpts from our minutes show.

Fears:

I'm afraid I won't fit in!

I won't be able to communicate my ideas.

We won't be able to bridge all our different settings, experiences, beliefs and approaches.

I'm afraid I'll be discounted or ignored.

There will be unresolved conflict.

Our plan won't be inclusive of the needs of all women working or learning in literacy. (But how can it be???)

I'll end up taking on a task that I am unhappy with or unsuited for.

We don't have enough time for all the work we need to do.

Hopes:

We will listen to each other and not silence each other.

We will come up with a process/plan that gives us concrete work to do, but also remains flexible enough to accommodate change as it's needed.

We will build a sense of connection, community and common purpose.

A plan.

Unity in the group.

Acceptance of difference.

Clarity of purpose.

Good communication and decision-making processes.

I want to have fun.

One major concern of the group was the process. We had been invited to come together to produce a book of curriculum, and we were eager to get started, but how could such a diverse group of relative strangers pull it off?

Not only did we come from different places in Canada, but politically, too, we were all over the map, or at least we worried we might be. Some of us were afraid the book might be too feminist to put our names on; others thought that our feminist politics might get so watered down we couldn't live with it. Some of us brought special interests we wanted to be sure others would respect: among us are First Nations women, women of colour, white women, lesbians and heterosexuals, rural and urban women; our ages range from mid-20s to 50; we have a variety of hidden and not-so-hidden disabilities.

When Elaine and Moon asked us to list our hopes and fears, most of us focused on concerns about conflicts, our ability to resolve them, and on the need to have a concrete, workable plan by the end of our short meeting. So we spent some time getting to know each other, our programs and students, in the hopes that such knowledge would reduce conflict, and we worked on a plan that would give us confidence and direction.

For two and a half days, we worked intensively. It was the end of the elk-calving season in Banff. Elk were everywhere, on the lawns and the sidewalks all over the campus, and hundreds of signs warned us that sudden and irrational behaviour could be expected from mother elk protecting their calves. The elk, however, seemed calm compared to us in the intensity of our relationships with each other, and the ferocity with which we threw ourselves into our work.

We planned a book that would look remarkably like the one you are reading; we planned the topics of each chapter and decided who would write each one; we decided that we would choose an editor or editorial team to write the introductory material, and "to edit for grammar and layout and consistency, while retaining the original voice of each author." We decided that each chapter would reflect the experience, teaching situation, and teaching style of the woman who wrote it, and the learners she works with, on the principle that these different voices would enhance the finished project, making it more broadly useful.

Before we went home, we formed buddy groups with four or five women in each group. Our assignment was to write our chapter, get feedback from the women in our buddy group, test it with some learners, and revise it in the light of this feedback, all in the next ten months or so.

A long winter passes

Many of us felt isolated during the time that passed before the next meeting. We often felt we were writing in a vacuum. Although the plan was to get in touch with members of our buddy group once a month, even if it was only to say hello or send chocolate, in fact, for most groups contact was much less frequent. Women who did send a chapter or part of a chapter to their buddy group did not always get the kind of immediate or helpful feedback they expected; women who did not have work to send out felt under pressure to do so, and sometimes felt guilty when they couldn't get things done. In short, just what you might expect of a group of women with lives to live, and various kinds of hang-ups about writing, who were asked to do a piece of work based on two days of planning with a group of strangers.

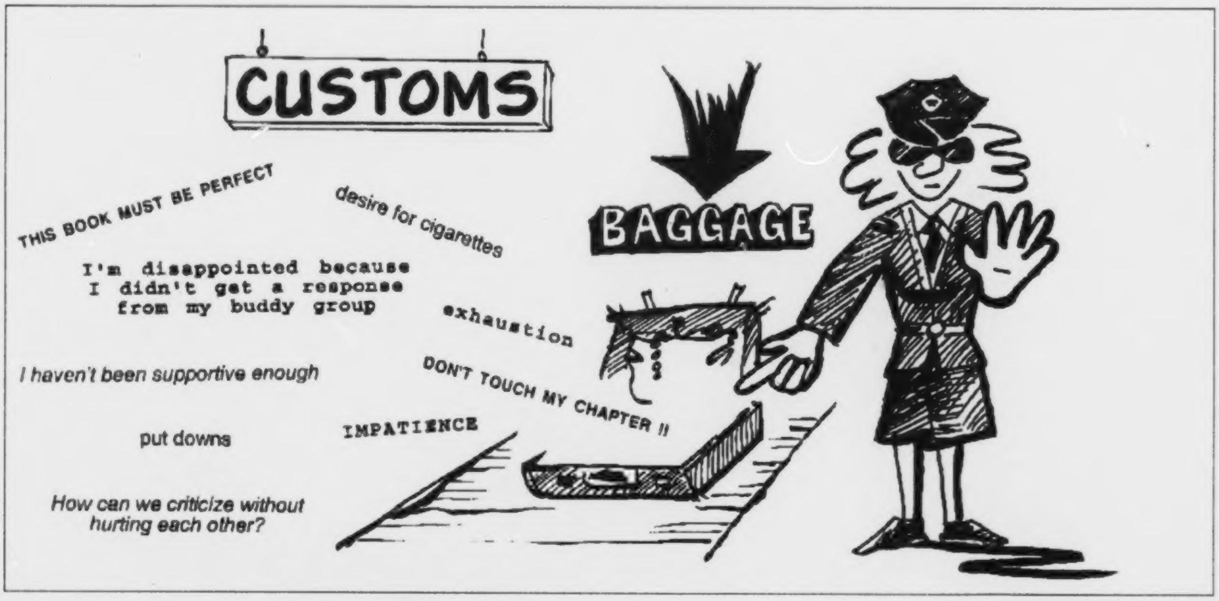
During this time, the CCLOW Board asked for a report on the project. A small temporary committee was struck, representing the four buddy groups. That group responded to Literacy Committee questions and sent out a "Where are we now?" letter. They refocused the upcoming meeting based on what had been happening with individual women, and assisted Aisla with some administrative decisions.

Some of us field tested our chapters with our own students, or found a colleague who would work with our material. A couple of women from the previous research project were interested in doing some field testing for us. Some of us found it easier to find testers than others, and some of the arrangements we made fell through. As a result, some of the chapters have been more thoroughly tested than others. Comments from learners and other instructors can be found in the chapters themselves.

We meet again

Finally it was time to meet again. Everybody received copies of everybody's latest revision, and we all met at Ste. Anne de Bellevue, Quebec. We worked together from Friday evening to Sunday noon in May 1995. Elaine and Moon were again facilitating, and Aisla was back to take notes of our proceedings, look after all the physical arrangements and generally treat us so well that all we had to do was get off the plane and go to work.

We began by unpacking, metaphorically, the negative "baggage" we had brought with us, but in spite of that, the sight of all the chapters together was inspiring; we were amazed by the diversity of the work we had produced. Next, we spent some time affirming the strengths, skills and sense of positive purpose we brought to the meeting.


CUSTOMS
BAGGAGE
THIS BOOK MUST BE PERFECT
desire for cigarettes
I'm disappointed because I didn't get a response from my buddy group
exhaustion
I haven't been supportive enough
DON'T TOUCH MY CHAPTER !!
put downs
IMPATIENCE
How can we criticize without hurting each other?

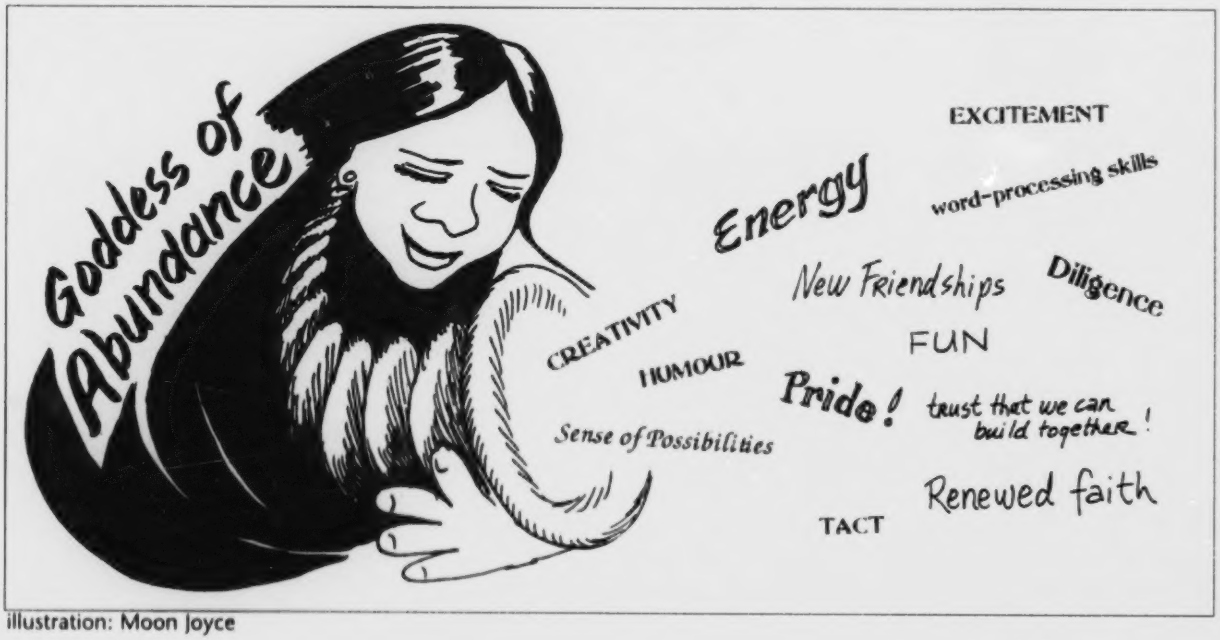

Goddess of Abundance
EXCITEMENT
Energy
word-processing skills
New Friendships
Diligence
CREATIVITY
FUN
HUMOUR
Pride!
trust that we can build together!
Sense of Possibilities
Renewed faith
TACT

illustration: Moon Joyce

Nevertheless, we went into the meeting with some fear; we were seeing the whole collection of chapters for the first time, and everyone was worried. Some of us had particular criticisms of other women's work that we didn't know how to broach; many of us were comparing our chapters to other people's work and finding our own wanting in some respect; everyone was aware of how different the various chapters were – could they really make a coherent whole?

Elaine helped us begin to voice these criticisms by suggesting we find someone we felt safe with to say all the negative things we had to say. Her reasoning was, "If I can say what I need to, I might be able to hear what others are saying. If I am critical, I can understand others being critical. If I notice how much others are self-critical, I may realize I don't have to voice all my criticisms." For some of us, that initial venting, to a safe ear, freed us up to do the work we had to do. Others still felt the tension when they discussed their chapters with women whose politics were very different.

We went over the chapters in great detail. We worked alone, in pairs, in groups, and in whirlwinds. The feedback which we had been largely unable to give over distance during the past year flowed from us. Assumptions that had been made at the last meeting were cleared up. Small and large changes were made to the chapters; some were completely re-written, others tightened up.

Each of us drew on her own experience to make suggestions about other chapters, and learned from the others' experience. One of us, for example, who teaches in a literacy classroom would find out what might happen to her material in an EAL class; a tutor might suggest how she would adapt classroom material for a one-on-one situation. The guiding questions in every discussion were: Is it clear and practical? Is it usable with learners? Is it inclusive? How is it feminist?

As well as working on individual chapters we thought again about the whole book; one result of our discussions is the material you are reading in this introductory section. Finally we agreed on an editor, an editorial team, a time line for completion of revisions and field testing, and a format for the entire book. Each woman was to make revisions to her chapter, get some feedback from field testing, and send it into the editor. We made individual agreements with other women to continue the feedback process by mail and phone after the meeting was over.

As we left St. Anne de Bellevue, many of us felt excited not only about the book but about the whole process. Some women, who more strongly identify as feminists, came away saying, "Yes, feminism is not a barrier; it is an enabler. Feminist principles have been at work here, and look what we have pulled off." Others, less strongly identifying as feminists, discovered or clarified certain ways of looking at the women we work with and our own roles as instructors and tutors, without being forced to "toe the party line."

We hadn't backed away from disagreements, but respectfully pushed and challenged each other. We focused on our own experience, and re-affirmed that we (instructors, tutors, feminists, whatever the "we" is) cannot tell other women what their lives are like, but rather must clear the way to hearing what they want to tell us.

Although diverse in our interests, backgrounds, values and beliefs, we came together with a purpose and respected each other accordingly. We were a group of women who spoke out and were listened to; our voices joined together to make a connection.

What Is a Feminist Curriculum?

by Kate Nonesuch

If you have leafed through this book before reading the introduction, you've seen what's here – chapters on various themes, such as herstory, role models, self esteem, cross-cultural awareness, roles, everyday life, safer sex and work, as well as chapters organized around the genres of poetry and song and one organized around women's ways of learning.

On closer inspection, the material seems to be learner-centred and respectful of difference; it offers instructors a variety of activities to suit a variety of learning styles; it offers learners lots of options and invites them to bring their own lives and needs into the classroom. There are, however, other curriculums with those attributes that do not call themselves feminist and, indeed, would shy away from that name. What makes this curriculum a feminist curriculum?

When you can't see the forest for the trees

Those characteristics we've already mentioned – learner-centredness, respect for differences, non-linear process – all are trees that grow in many forests. They make up a large part of the forest that we call feminist curriculum, but they also grow elsewhere, for example, in the forests we call "whole language," "learner-centred," "non-traditional," and "popular education," to name a few. You may be used to seeing them there. However, there are some trees that grow only in a feminist curriculum, and those are the ones that concern us now.

Before going further, let's look at a particular tree – "women only" – and clear up some problems of identification. In fact, you don't need a women-only group to use a feminist curriculum and, generally, the material in these chapters is not meant to be used exclusively with women-only classes. It is important to use it in mixed groups and it will prove to be good curriculum for both men and women. (Indeed, if it were restricted to woman-only groups, it would have limited practical use, since most literacy and English-as-an-additional-language (EAL) classes have both women and men in them.) Of course, it could be used with women-only groups and it would be very interesting to use it with men-only groups. In any case, a program can be woman-only and not necessarily be feminist. For example, a women-only class on re-entry to the workforce that concentrates on training "good" employees, that does not comment when women choose to enter low-paying traditional jobs, but instead focuses on dressing for success and word processing, is not feminist. So, what trees grow in the feminist forest that don't grow in other forests?

We put women at the centre of this curriculum

We asked ourselves from the beginning, "What ways of learning and instruction have we found to be most useful when working with women literacy learners?" We know that many of the same principles and methods are also successful when we work with men literacy learners. We also asked, "What issues are important to women?" Some of our chapters focus on the everyday lives of women, lives which are usually invisible, and where visible, often undervalued. About more general issues, we asked, "How does it affect women's lives?" (See "Women at the Centre of the Curriculum", page 13.) Furthermore, "women's issues" are not just for women. Some men want to understand women's issues and to learn how best to support women. For example, courses for women in trades and technology often prepare women to deal with sexism on the job; it is equally vital for men to learn how the traditional workplace discriminates against women and how a woman might feel to find herself part of a very small minority on the job. Men may also want to learn how to deal with men who hassle women at work and how to make the workplace a welcoming one for women.

We are concerned with issues of diversity

A feminist curriculum is not a uniform curriculum. It aspires to include voices, experiences and values of all women, whether or not they would define themselves as feminist.

We are concerned with issues of power

Who has power, and how do they maintain it? Who has an opportunity for self-determination, and who is defined by those in power? The answers to these questions are not simple and involve race, culture, sexual orientation and ability as well as gender. They often raise problems of divided loyalties as we consider the various groups we belong to, some of which have more power than others.

Many men have similar issues around power, identity and control, especially men who are not white, middle class, heterosexual and well educated. Our curriculum makes space for people to consider such issues.

We make space for women's experience

We do not assume that the generic "he" includes all of us. For example, in the chapter "Choosing Safer Sex," we say, "Use a condom." This is good advice for both men and women. However, we recognize that in reality men have much more freedom to make that choice than women do. We make sure we say clearly that in most heterosexual relationships, a man can say, "I'm going to use a condom," without getting hassled, but if a woman says, "I want you to use a condom," her wishes may be denied. Then we invite women to share techniques for getting their needs met or we offer some assertive stances that may work, always recognizing that for some women the actual or potential violence in the situation means she does not have a choice. We make sure we say it out loud because it acknowledges women's real place in the power imbalance. Very likely, someone in the class will be in that situation. If we don't say it, we conspire to silence her.

We are concerned with emotions

The authors of the chapters in this book are at some pains to take into account the emotional needs of learners – validation of what they already know, safety, increased self-esteem and so on. In the activities outlined here, emotions are front and centre, acknowledged and analyzed. The acknowledgement and analysis of emotions, in western culture, have been the province of women; in institutions of learning, where for centuries women were banned, emotions were also banned. We put them back into the curriculum and say they are important.

Many men and some women may be reluctant to take part in such activities, and resist this part of the curriculum; they may say that such activities are not "real" school. If a curriculum were "man-centered," we might dispense with or disguise exercises that, for instance, ask learners to remember what it was like to fail in school. In this curriculum, we say women are used to doing the emotional work in our society, it is important work and we will recognize it. In order to do good academic work, women need to have their feelings acknowledged, and their needs for physical and emotional safety met. In this curriculum women's need to deal with their emotions is given priority over some men's need to deny their feelings.

Of course, there are men in our classes who are ready and willing to take on emotional work, especially men who belong to Alcoholics Anonymous, or who have been in a treatment program for drug addiction. I once saw a student come away from a group of learners exchanging stories about what illiteracy had done to their lives. He was a tall, strong man, wearing a muscle shirt, upper body covered in tattoos, eyes red and teary, and reaching for his cigarettes. "Man," he said to a group of us sitting outside, "that crying really takes it out of you."

We try to tell the truth when the truth is hidden

The chapter called "Women of Courage: Herstory" is a great example. First learners are invited to notice that some groups of people are not in the history books, then to suggest some reasons for the omission. Many activities ask them to supply the omission, and finally to go out into their communities to share their new knowledge. However, it is not just in the past that women are hidden; every one of these chapters tries to bring out hidden aspects of women's lives.

We try to tell the truth when the truth is difficult

The chapter called "Exploring Learning and Identity," for example, deals with the pain and violence, both emotional and physical, that many learners experienced in early school lives. Since this early pain may well affect learning in adulthood, making it part of the curriculum may enable some learners to move on to a more fruitful learning experience at this time.

We encourage women to speak in their own voices

The activities in this book encourage women to state their opinions, recognize the truth about their lives, what is good in them and what is not so good; the activities encourage women to talk to each other about their experiences, to see similarities in spite of differences, to make alliances and to work for change at a personal and/or a political level.

What a feminist curriculum is not!

Finally, a feminist curriculum does not tell women what to think, how to live or what to do. It does not tell them they must change, or in what direction to move. Instead, it invites women to look at their lives and at the lives of others, to make connections between them and to think about issues of invisibility and power. A feminist curriculum does not tell women that everything is all right. It does not encourage women to change themselves in order to fit in better or to lie to themselves in order to feel better. A curriculum that suggests we change the women instead of changing the system is not a feminist curriculum.

What do you do with a feminist curriculum?

A feminist curriculum, of course, is more than a series of chapters, more than reading material for students. The instructor who chooses to offer such material to learners and the learners who agree to participate are the ones who animate the curriculum. We offer it to you, knowing that you will adapt it to the learners and the situations where you work. You will insert your favourite readings and activities into our chapters, and use parts of these chapters in programs you already have in place.

Warnings

We offer this curriculum to you with some trepidation. We believe that the activities and the readings presented here encourage change and we know that change may be initially unwelcome, both to those doing the changing and to those around them.

The more you work to encourage change, the more repercussions there may be. If you are a seasoned worker for change, you will already know that you can expect resistance or backlash, as well as more positive effects. If you have never worked with learners using material that encourages them to think about their lives and to make changes in them, you might want to reflect on the following ideas as you are getting started:

- When you invite people to take part in the activities in this book and make the class a place of safety and risk-taking, you can expect learners, both women and men, to come to you with issues from their past that they have never dealt with. (To get ready for dealing with some of this, please read "Responding to Disclosures of Abuse in Women's Lives," page 15)
- People make changes in their lives in their own ways and at their own paces; they will be at different points of readiness for thinking about change and making change. They will do only what they are ready to do.
- Resistance to your using this curriculum will come from many sources. It will come from learners themselves, especially from men who do not see themselves reflected as they might expect. Clearly, you cannot force learners to use this material. They will not be forced, and there would be no point to trying to do so. However, do not be fooled by the loudest protesters into thinking that everyone in the class does not like the material you are using. If you offer the material in such a way that those who want to participate can, and offer alternate activities to others, you will not have to deal with so much resistance directed against you and you may find that the size of the group working on these activities gradually grows.
- Resistance will also come from administrators and other instructors or tutors. This will vary in type and strength, but will always be less if you are working with learners who have chosen to work with you on this curriculum. Make the learners your allies. Find some other allies as well – a mentor, a counsellor who works with the learners in your class, a librarian who will help the learners with research and get to know your program.
- You will almost surely find resistance coming from within yourself. You may hear voices saying, "It's not real literacy work," "I can't measure what they are learning," "I'll get into a lot of trouble for rocking the boat," "It's too hard to figure out how to adapt these ideas to my situation, and the repercussions are huge if I do it wrong," and so on. Don't beat yourself up. Some times and places are more fruitful than others. Work with the learners and with your other allies. Start slowly and watch what happens.

We offer you this curriculum also with pride and hope.

Women at the Centre of the Curriculum

by Janet Isserlis

WHAT HAPPENS when we put women at the centre of the curriculum? I reflect on this question from my teaching experience, which is rooted in participatory literacy work.* Participatory literacy work has everything to do with the primacy of learners' knowledge, feelings and experience. Working with men or women involves actively listening, carefully guiding and often allowing oneself to do very little at all. How do we listen to women when we are all and only women, together, and how do we listen to women when men are around?

I imagine the "we" I refer to as a broad-based group of women literacy workers who believe in the primacy of learners' strengths, voices and experience, and who dynamically work with those strengths, voices and experience to assist learners in accomplishing goals which the learners name.** Some of us believe that literacy and education should move women forward to "change power relations [and] transform socio-economic systems." We may frame such work as education for transformation. Others of us may remain more neutral on power issues.** Many of us view education as a social endeavour and literacy as a social process. Our work with learners and the material developed for this curriculum is informed by these beliefs.

Some examples

When a group of women – learners and instructors – come together in a conversation group, we find ourselves talking about what may have happened during the previous class, chatting about the weather and sooner or later sharing a story that someone will have written to share with group or will have thought of because of something just said in the circle. Women who have been in the group for a while help newcomers, translate when needed and take on facilitation tasks such as welcoming visitors, organizing the day's agenda and making suggestions about what we should do.

There is no real mystery to the ways in which these women have learned to listen to one another, to ask their teacher for help with words or spelling or to decide that they want to spend some time learning to type. The interactions of the group have been modelled, discussed and passed on as new learners join the circle. Certain events occur regularly and consistently. There is a composition book into which new words are written. Stories brought into class will be typed and distributed the following day. A piece of mail, a notice from a child's teacher and the day's headlines are all open for discussion and exploration.

In another group of both men and women learners, the content of the reading, writing and speaking is again determined by the learners and their interests. Stories they dictate are typed up and distributed the following day, with expansion activities included on the worksheet for more advanced learners. The facilitator ponders how to allow for women's needs, strengths and interests as learners, when their culture has told them to defer to men, where the official agenda at this site is to make newcomers welcome into the school. When women's issues are taken up, the conversations are sometimes tenuous or difficult. The men are bored, at best; the women can't speak of their problems in front of the group.

Meeting women's needs in mixed-gender classes

How then, do we go about meeting the needs of women learners, while respecting their privacy and their cultural expectations in a way that might enable them to expand the choices they have and increase their ability to make decisions, without imposing an agenda of our own?

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*My recent work has been shared with Louié Ettling, who posed many thoughtful questions as I was writing this piece.

**The frameworks of conservative, liberal and transformational education are clearly explained in *Educating for a Change* by Rick Arnold, Bev Burke, Carl James, Darcy Martin and Barb Thomas (1991, Between the Lines and the Doris Marshall Institute for Education and Action) p.23.

Meeting women's needs in mixed-gender classes is an ongoing challenge. The recognition that everyone in the class has the right to be heard is tempered by the need to find the balance that somehow enables a facilitator to assist more quiet voices in being heard. People, often women, who have long been silent and/or silenced, cannot be coerced into speaking because we think it would be good for them. It has often been the case, though, that as learners continue to participate in a class and begin to feel trust among group members, they do find ways to speak about important things.

In order to facilitate this preparation for speaking, we make our classrooms safe places and ourselves available listeners. A woman who does not feel safe speaking out loud uses the dialogue journal as a place where she can discuss worries about her husband. Others bring concerns about work, money and families.

We work through actions, through creating a non-threatening and comfortable classroom environment. We work to help learners feel a sense of community by demonstrating our own interest in what they have to say and in encouraging them to share their stories, to help one another, to work together in learning to read and write. We value learners' contributions, recognize their strengths and make these actions explicit. We help women see that their knowledge is important and valuable.

When someone asks how to spell a word, I re-direct the question to the group. When someone asks me a question, I ask if I can send that question to the group. What do I think about the grade 1 teacher? What do the others think, I ask? What do we know about her? What do we want to know? How can we get more information? We work from the outside, from questions people are first most willing to ask, building trust, using questions to create sentences, grammar reviews for those who want them, reading practice and writing practice. The "what" of what we're doing isn't so complicated. The "how" of it is recognizable: A typed-up story. A discussion round, where each person responds to a question, or speaks about anything she pleases. A paired-interview session where partners report back and we come to know and trust one another more. The substance and content of these activities reflect more and more the deeper concerns of the people in the circle.

Letting learners determine content requires hard work; it is teaching in a collaborative manner. Listening to their questions, helping them see where the answers lie and how to get the answers, and finding appropriate information to add to the existing knowledge of the group is part of the job. Developing grammar, writing or reading work from this content is part of the job. Helping learners cross the bridge from their own writing to that of others, in other contexts, (newspapers, textbooks, flyers, letters to the editor) is part of the job. Helping learners see what they've learned, name their questions and realize their progress is part of the job.

Where we take their work, where we allow it to go, depends on the learners. Some courses carry constraints and restrictions, where outcomes are established externally and learners are expected to achieve certain things, like finish a GED or pass a particular exam. Even within those parameters there is room to listen, to find out always what learners already know and then to find appropriate ways to link their knowledge to new information, to help them learn to find their own ways toward the information they need.

In my experience, when women learners are at the centre of the curriculum, when they build curriculum, when they participate in discussions, when they see their words written and read by others, when they recognize the value of their words while realistically acknowledging the challenges ahead of them beyond the classroom walls – when these things occur, women are strengthened in ways that are hard to measure but that nonetheless serve them well.

Responding to Disclosures of Abuse in Women's Lives

by Jenny Horsman

IN THIS section I want to focus particularly on childhood experiences of sexual abuse and briefly on adult experiences in abusive relationships. Figures for the number of women who were sexually abused as children vary from estimates of one in five to much higher. It seems fair to assume that women in literacy programs will at the very least fit this average. The percentage of women in literacy programs who experienced abuse as children could even be greater, as some reactions to abuse which have been widely documented are an inability to pay attention, acting out, or being barely "present." Such reactions might well have got in the way of a girl's attempts to learn to read. The experiences of abuse, which may have hindered learning to read in childhood, may still get in the way in adulthood if women do not address the impact on their life.

The experience of women who have been or are still being abused as adults may also interfere with their learning. Very often they have been told they are stupid and unable to learn; abusers may maintain control over their victims in part by convincing them that they are too stupid to survive on their own, that they couldn't ever learn to do a job or go back to school. These effects may last long after the woman has left an abusive relationship; if the woman is still being battered, she may get fresh messages every day that tell her she can't succeed at learning. As well, shame and embarrassment may force her to miss classes when she has a black eye or visible bruises.

Women who have survived rape may also have memories that are more or less fresh. Some women may never have told anyone; others may have laid charges and gone through the police and court systems. They may have been made to feel ashamed of themselves, or to think that they invited rape. Much of the talk, and some of the learning materials, at their literacy program may remind them of their experience.

Programs must respond structurally to the needs of women for a violence-free place to learn. This might include, as a bare minimum, a policy against sexual harassment, a commitment to following that policy, tutors who have been educated in the issues, and a sound-proof room where women can speak confidentially. Tutors and staff need opportunities for training and reflection about the ways experiences of violence impact on literacy work.

Literacy workers are not usually trained as therapists or counsellors, and the advice in this chapter is not that you should do therapy. Rather it is that you recognize that experiences of violence may have an impact on literacy learning and that the trust and space to take risks, which are necessary for adults to learn to read, can lead to the telling of experiences of abuse. Entering a literacy program necessarily opens up memories of childhood and school days. It is often a first step towards control and healing. As a literacy worker you will be dealing with these memories whether you wish to or not. If stories of violence are told you need to be prepared so that you can provide as much support as possible and avoid re-victimizing the woman.

There is a range of things you can do to support a woman who has been abused, depending on her needs and wishes and your comfort level. In this chapter we will look at many of these in detail.

In this section I have drawn on my experience working with a women's group and with one woman who began to tell me about her memories. I will call her Mary. Anecdotes of our experience are included in italics. Mary and I had many discussions as I worked on this section. I read much of it to her, especially all the pieces which describe our work together. She added many ideas and encouraged me to rethink many of my own. The advice here reflects our experience of working together. Mary is a white woman who grew up in Toronto. I do not know how far our experience of working together will be relevant for women of other ethnicities or in other locations. You may need to draw from this material and adapt it for your situation.

There is a list of useful books and articles at the end of this section (Resources, page 28).

Prepare Yourself

The following material gives you some points to think about before you arc taken unawares by a woman speaking about her experiences of violence. Thinking ahead will prepare you to choose your responses.

What might lead a learner to disclose?

If you recognize that women you are working with might have been abused, you will speak about issues of abuse in a way that shows you would not be surprised if any woman said she had been abused as a child, or was in an abusive relationship now. When you speak in this way you make it easier for a woman to speak out about the abuse in her life.

The trust that you build in a class, when you try to create a space where women can take risks as they learn to read, can also encourage a woman to take the risk to speak of the violence, or memories of violence, she lives with.

There are a variety of questions which, when you open them up, encourage women to think about whether they want to talk about their experiences of abuse. Many different topics could be triggers which bring these experiences to the surface. For instance: Are you planning on talking about childhood, school days or women's personal histories? Just the mention of family trees, Mother's Day or parenting could be a trigger. Are you going to read a story, a song or a poem which describes violence or neglect in a woman's or child's life? Are you going to talk about issues in society, which might lead to people speaking about violence? Are you going to talk about sexual abuse, or sexual harassment, or "family violence" or robberies, or whether the streets are safe?

My relationship with Mary began when we were talking about childhood in a women's group I was leading and she said, "Things happen to children that shouldn't." Then she called me up to apologize. I couldn't remember exactly what she had said, but I reassured her that she could say anything she wanted in our group. Then she spoke a little more about her childhood. Gradually she told me more and more. Soon it felt as if she was calling me all the time to tell me more about her life. One minute I would feel I should help and the next I would be angry and retreating. Eventually I had an inspiration that perhaps if I offered something specific, a regular time that we could talk, I could support her without struggling to respond to demands that felt much larger than I could cope with. In the end I suggested we should meet regularly and read, write and talk about the issues of abuse in her life. This began many years of working together one-to-one. We have occasionally discussed forming a group but she is still unsure whether she would want to talk in a group.

How might a learner disclose?

Whether you are working in a mixed group, a women's group or with one learner, women may refer to the violence in their lives. A woman might speak in the class about violence that is happening in her life now, or her childhood memories, but often she will want to tell you alone. She might just hang out with you, talking about other things, but checking out whether she could dare to tell you something important. She might just suggest that she has something to say and then wait for your reaction.

How will you react?

If your reaction – shock or disbelief, impatience or defensiveness – tells her that it is not okay to talk about such things, it may reinforce her feelings that the abuse is her fault, that she deserves to be beaten or hurt and that she must stay silent. But if you show her that it is okay to talk about it, you may find that you have begun a relationship where you feel a responsibility to offer support, or feel drawn into the problems in her life.

Think ahead of time about what you are prepared to take on.

Do some research

Find out what resources are available in your community which you can help women access. Check whether the counsellors are available, not fully booked. Check whether support groups are ongoing and open for new members and so on.

Try to get to know some counsellors so that you can help with the referral process by being able to describe what a counsellor is like and honestly report that you think she will be good.

What Can You Do?

Validate her experience

At the minimum, be clear that it is okay to talk about what has happened, or is happening. State clearly that nobody deserves to be hurt, either as an adult or a child. Validate that childhood abuse does have a major impact in the present.

Help her find help

You can refer women to either people or books.

If the violence is happening **now**:

- Provide information about the crisis phone lines, transition houses, safe houses, therapists, counsellors and support groups available in your community to help her to check out her options.
- Suggest reading about the issues. The book *You Can Be Free: An Easy-to-Read Handbook for Abused Women* is a wonderful resource. It is easy to read and so could be read by a woman alone, or with help, to support her in weighing up her options when she is in a violent relationship and deciding whether to leave.
- Many services also provide pamphlets which clearly state women's rights, the process which should take place if they call the police, and other alternatives.

If she is struggling with **memories** of childhood abuse:

- Offer help to find a therapist or a group to support her work on the issues.
- Suggest reading about the issues. *The Courage to Heal* and *The Courage to Heal Workbook* are both excellent resource books for working with memories of abuse. For a woman who is seeking help they offer information on finding a therapist and joining a support group. Questions of why such support is important and how to choose a resource which is appropriate are taken up clearly. The books are not easy to read so a woman would need help using them. *Beginning to Heal* is also helpful. It is written for

literacy learners, but is sometimes simplified so much that the information is not as complex as it needs to be for a woman to understand her feelings.

In either situation:

- You might refer her to stories by other women who had abusive childhoods and relationships. Women may find these accounts hard to read. Before a woman reads such an account she might want to know what it is about, and if she chooses to read it she might want support. A list of learner-written and non-learner autobiographies of this sort is included in the reading list at the end of this chapter.

Whatever suggestions you make about alternative supports available, whether people or written materials, it is crucial that the woman make her own decisions and retain control of what resources she makes use of. If she feels unable to leave an abusive partner and go to a shelter, or if she chooses not to see a therapist, it is important that you respect her process and do not judge her.

Encourage her to take on what she feels ready to, at her own speed. You may offer a referral to counselling, but she may need time and support before she is ready to speak to someone new. She has already taken an enormous step to begin to talk about her experience. She may not be ready to take another step for some time. The trust built up in the literacy interaction is not necessarily carried over to telling others about the experience.

Set up ongoing tutoring or small group work

A woman might want help to write about her experiences with violence and read about other women's experiences. She might want to have a regular forum for working on these issues. She might find this useful, as well as seeing a counsellor or joining a support group. If she is not ready to do that direct work outside the program, she may find tutoring or joining a group in the literacy program a safer place to begin to explore the impact of violence in her life.

You could tutor a woman yourself, find another tutor, or set up a small group, if you think several women would be interested. Detailed suggestions for how this work could be done are included later in the section called "Literacy Work with Memories" (page 20).

Offer support

Whether a woman works on her issues with a tutor inside the program or a counsellor outside the program, she may also appreciate support from others. By support here I mean something less structured than the literacy work focused on abuse suggested in the previous section. A woman may want a listening ear. She may want somewhere to talk about her experiences with a therapist, in a survivors' group, in tutoring or in a literacy group. She may want to be reminded that she is a strong woman, a survivor, and that there are other things in her life besides memories of abuse.

You might be able to offer support of this sort. If you are not in a position to listen and support in this way, you might want to suggest someone else in the program who can be, or you could suggest setting up a support group. A group could include women tutors, staff or learners who felt able to offer support, as well as one or more women who need support.

A support group would need to agree to its own ground rules. You could follow a process similar to that recommended in "Prepare to work together" in "Literacy Work with Memories" (page 21) to ensure that everyone is respected and feels in control of the process.

If the woman you are trying to support is experiencing a crisis stage, make sure you are not the only support and that she knows the phone number to all the crisis lines in your area. Check "Respond to Crises" (page 23) in "Literacy Work with Memories" for more about ways to support a woman in crisis.

If you are in the middle of a crisis stage yourself with your own memories, or in your own life, you may not be in a position to offer someone else any kind of support. If so you need to be very clear that you cannot provide help yourself. Explain why you cannot offer support at this time and encourage her to seek other supports. If possible help her to find and use these supports.

Look after Yourself

Any sort of contact with experiences of violence has an effect on the listener. Whether you hear brief mentions of the violence or extended stories, you will need to think about how to look after yourself.

Set boundaries

You may find any support or tutoring you offer expands to take up more and more of your time and energy. You need to set boundaries. Your boundaries may include such aspects as when you have time to talk with her, or whether she can call you at home or not, or what you are able to listen to. It is important for you to set your own boundaries or you may find yourself trying to respond to a need which may feel bottomless. Anyone who was abused as a child had her boundaries violated and so did not have a chance to learn to value herself and to set her own boundaries or assume boundaries in others.

If you do not set boundaries you are likely to give more of your time and energy than you are comfortable with, and several problems may arise. If you give more than you are comfortable with, eventually you are likely to feel angry that too much is being asked of you. You may hold your irritation in, so that it grows and you eventually take your anger out on others, or blow up at the woman herself. Or you may show your resentment by being late or giving mixed messages. This is not good for the woman or for you.

If you know and can be clear about your boundaries, you offer an example that boundaries are good things to have. If you do not protect your own boundaries, you send a message, however subtle, that you don't respect your own needs and that you don't think it is okay to say no. Respecting her own needs and learning to say no are important skills survivors need to learn. Your example may help her learning, and help you not to commit yourself to too much.

Recognize that it is toxic to hear details of violence

If you find yourself bearing witness to accounts of the horrors in a woman's life, it is very important to recognize that what you are hearing is toxic, and painful for you. If you do not acknowledge this, it is quite likely that you will end up angry: angry with men (or with women) who have carried out the violence, or angry with the woman for asking you to hear such horrors, or angry with the next person who asks something of you because you have already heard too much. Or perhaps you will find yourself seeing only pain in the world.

Create a way to deal with the pain

One of the authors of *The Courage to Heal* writes that at the end of workshops she takes a shower and remembers each woman she has worked with. She thinks about whether there is something more she needs to say to each woman, and then as the water washes over her, she imagines it washing away the pain she is holding.

I found that after sessions of hearing about Mary's painful childhood it helped me to let go if I scheduled an evening of playing with a child. Seeing that child's confidence, strength and fun-filled life, and playing myself, helped me to let go of the horror of hearing of a childhood filled with every kind of pain and neglect. It stopped that pain from becoming the only thing I could see.

Recognize that it is painful to bear witness. Find your own way to put the pain outside you and let go of what you have heard.

Work on your own issues

Ask yourself, "Why am I interested in supporting a woman to address her issues of violence?" Often we are hooked by a need that is similar to our own. Many of us who respond to women's needs about violence have ourselves experienced violence. It is really important to notice if supporting another woman is raising your own issues. You may need to find a source of support to explore these issues. Perhaps you need to see a therapist, or join a survivors' group. Do not blur your issues together with those of the woman seeking your support or look for support from her.

If you have issues of abuse in your own past, it may mean that you have wonderful empathy with other women's issues, but it also may mean that you have difficulty with personal boundaries yourself, and repressed anger about your abuse. You need to take on your issues separately from your work with survivors of abuse in the literacy program.

You may find yourself in a crisis, or providing poor support, if you thought you had already addressed your own issues, or did not realize you had issues which would surface as you began to work with a survivor. It is crucial that you do not continue in that situation. You need to be clear to the woman why you cannot continue. You will need to seek help in finding support yourself to address your issues and in finding alternative supports for the woman or women you were working with.

Literacy Work with Memories

This section deals with working with a learner on memories of childhood sexual abuse specifically. However, if you are working with a woman who is dealing with rape or violence in an adult relationship, the material here can be easily adapted. You will want to change the content of the books, videos and other resources you use, but the principles remain the same: the need for the two of you to get ready to work together; for the learner to have control of the process; for you to take care of yourself. The work you both do on reading and writing about the experiences, and the elements of the relationship between you will be similar.

If a woman wants to take on tutoring or participate in a group working directly on the memories of abuse, the stories of abuse can become a central theme for her literacy work. Then literacy learning can become part of a therapeutic process which can help the woman to deal with the trauma of abuse. If at all possible, this literacy work should not be the woman's only support. She will need professional counselling or therapy and the support of friends or family. However, not every woman has access to suitable supports or she may not be ready to seek them out even if they are available.

This section has been written to a tutor working on a one-to-one basis with a learner, so you will need to adapt the material for group situations.

Three key books for supporting someone who is dealing with memories of abuse in her life are: *The Courage to Heal, Beginning to Heal,* and *The Courage to Heal Workbook.* They provide a background in how to address the issues. Various chapters from these books are recommended in the next section.

Prepare to work together

Before you even begin to do work together you need to talk about how you are going to work. Revealing details of abuse can be a terrifying process for the learner and difficult to hear for the worker or tutor. Talk together about what will work for you both. Talk about your fears. Don't make assumptions about what is okay. Negotiate how to work together well. Some questions to prompt this talk are:

- What would help us both to feel safe as we do this work together?
- What can we say?
- What can't we say?
- What do we want from each other?
- What do we not want from each other?
- What can we say about this tutoring outside this room?
- What mustn't we say about this tutoring outside this room?
- What do you want in the way of support?
- What I can give in the way of support is ....
- What I can't give in the way of support is ....
- What are we afraid of?
- What are our hopes?
- Where do we want to do this work?
- Do we want to be free of interruptions?
- How can we make sure that we are not interrupted, if this matters to us?
- What do we know right now about **how** we want to work together or about **what** we want to do together?

If this conversation is difficult you may want to begin by asking whether she has ever felt safe. If she has, you could ask her to describe a time she felt safe and then to tell what about the experience made her feel safe. If she has never felt safe you might ask what has stopped her feeling safe and help her to think about what she would need to feel safe. This exploration may help you to agree together on some ground rules for safety.

Write ground rules

When you have finished this talk, you may both want to write a list of expectations and ground rules about how you will work together. A beginning literacy learner may want to dictate to you, or have you help her write her list. When you have both created a list, read them to each other. You may need to negotiate an agreement if you had any different ideas. Keep these statements so that you can always add to them as you learn new things that you were not clear about at the start.

Remind her you do not believe it was her fault

You may want to state clearly at the start that you do not believe any abuse is the fault of the child or woman who was abused. You may want to make sure that the learner understands that you think no less of her whatever abuse happened to her or whatever ways she survived. If she did anything she judges herself for, such as becoming pregnant as a teenager, or working as a prostitute, she may be sure you will judge her too and believe that it was her fault. A general statement, made at the beginning and repeated every so often, that you do not believe that it was her fault, may help a woman feel less shame and discomfort as she talks to you.

Read, tell and write about the experiences

One mainstay of your work together will probably be reading, telling and writing about experiences of violence. Work focused on dealing with crises, recognizing that the abuse was not her fault, or addressing consequences of abuse such as not taking care of herself, or being re-victimized can also be important "curriculum" for your work together.

Check in

Talking about the previous week or the time since you last got together can provide ideas about what to work on together. How is she doing physically? Has she been dreaming, and thinking about experiences of abuse? Has she had flashbacks of memories she had forgotten? Has she been feeling angry about something which happened during the week which connects to how she remembers being treated as a child? Talking about the week may give you ideas to suggest material to read together. Perhaps she wants to write about what happened or how she felt about it. Does she come with a strong idea of what she wants to read or write about? If so, that will provide your direction for the session.

Read stories

Reading stories others have told may help a learner tell or write her story, and lead her to recognize the common ground she shares with other survivors. You will want to read these stories yourself before you read them with the learner so that you can tell her what the story is about. Then **she** can decide whether she is ready to hear about these experiences. As you read together, you may want to take turns so that she is not always focusing on the mechanics of the print. The learner may want to read as long as she chooses, then you can take over for about the same amount of print, then she can take a turn again, and so on. If she is a beginning reader you may need to read most of the material or to choose pieces which are as easy to read as possible. You may want to stop quite frequently to talk about what she is feeling and give her the option to stop and do something different, or stop and write about her feelings or her own memories which are brought to the surface by the reading.

Watch videos

You may want to watch videos which tell the stories of survivors. There are several excellent videos produced by the National Film Board. Like the stories in print, you will want to view them first so that you can tell the learner exactly what happens in the video. Then she can decide whether she is ready to watch such material. If you choose to watch a video you will want to remind the learner what happens before she starts to watch and encourage her to stop the video whenever she does not want to see any more. If the video was hard to watch you might want to check with the learner to see what she needs after it. Does she want to talk about it, write or move to something completely different? If she wants to continue, you may want to talk about how she felt or what she thought as she watched the video. You might ask what she would want to say to any of the people in the video. She could write about any of these topics, or about her own story and how it is similar to or different from the stories in the video.

Read self-help books

You could also read chapters from *The Courage to Heal* or other self-help books to help the learner to explore issues of abuse and to feel that it is okay to tell her own story. If you look at the table of contents together and talk about what each chapter is about, you can decide together what sections are of interest at any particular time.

Make collages

The learner could create a collage to explore any aspect of the abuse she experienced, or to explore her feelings about the abuse, or her reaction to another woman's story she has read about or listened to. To make a collage you need a variety of magazines or catalogues, especially those with lots of coloured pictures, scissors, glue and a large piece of paper to stick the pictures and words you cut out on to. Encourage the learner not to think too carefully about what she is choosing to include but just go with whatever feels right. The learner may want to work on the collage for a short while over several sessions. She may want to add to it or change it at a later date. After it is finished you could talk about what it shows, and what is missing, what she would do differently if she started again, what it felt like to make the collage, and what she has learned from it. This might then lead to writing on any of the themes you have discussed.

As the learner writes, or creates collages, she needs to know that she always has the right to decide whether or not she will share them with you, or with anyone else. Don't assume you are invited to read them, but be prepared to if she asks you. Making the stories public in some way may be important for her to begin to leave them behind. But they must remain her stories. Help her to decide on a safe place to store her writings so that they will not be seen by anyone she does not choose to share them with.

Respond to crises

Many women, as they are beginning to remember and speak or write about their childhood abuse, relive the feelings of terror, panic, pain and helplessness they felt, and could hardly allow themselves to feel, as a child when the abuse took place. These powerful emotions can lead a woman to feel that she cannot bear to feel so much. This may lead to various responses such as numbing out, coldness, avoidance, anger, grief or suicidal feelings. It is not unusual for a survivor who is reliving past traumas to experience many crises.

If the learner you are working with is in such a crisis state, you may want to refer her to, or seek advice from, a therapist, counsellor or crisis worker. You could also work together in some of the ways which follow. The response to the crises can include important reading and writing activities which may be invaluable to the woman, as well as part of the curriculum you follow together.

You could read "The Emergency Stage" from *Beginning to Heal* together. When you have finished reading you could talk about what it felt like to read it. Often recognizing that other women have also felt dreadful as they were in the midst of working on memories of abuse can help a woman to feel less alone. Ask questions such as:

- How well does the author describe the emergency stage?
- Does it feel familiar? Do any of the women's stories remind you of your story?
- How do you think the author knows what it feels like?
- Do you think any of the ideas suggested in the chapter to help you survive the emergency stage would be useful for you?

You need to mention that the phone number in the book is American and check your local phone book to find a rape crisis phone line, or an assaulted women's help line, or suicide prevention lines. If there is a women's line of some sort in your region, women who were abused by men may prefer to call such a line to be sure a woman will answer the phone. Although men working on a suicide prevention line may be well trained to deal with women's issues, a male voice might be difficult for some women. Talk it through. Write down any emergency numbers that the learner thinks she might use. Talk about where she will keep those numbers.

Together you can create a "things to do in a panic" list along the lines of the one in the book. This emergency plan should include the emergency numbers in your region as well as phone numbers of all the friends and family who can offer support. You may need to come back to this list many times to see if there is anything to be added. Encourage the learner to be creative and tap all her resources to support her in times of crisis. She may want to check with those she is hoping can support her to see what help they are willing to give. Do not take on a larger role yourself than you are comfortable with. Be clear what support you can offer and what support you cannot.

Together, you could also create a list of "reasons to hope," or "things which make me smile," or "reasons to stay alive." She could write any of these lists on a series of cards for her to put all over her home to remind her when she is feeling bad.

You could both write a letter of support and faith in her ability to heal and to come through the bad times. Together, you could create a list of others who she could also ask to write such a letter to remind her that others care for her and believe in her.

If you need to return to strategies to survive feeling suicidal you could create a "Suicide Prevention Plan" on the lines of the one in *The Courage to Heal Workbook*. After you have created this plan together you might want to talk about how it felt to create it. You may want to come back to this plan during future sessions and see if anything should be added or changed.

Help her to believe that it was not her fault

A big issue for many survivors is struggling with the belief that the abuse may have been her fault. There are several reading and writing activities which could focus on this.

Working on helping a survivor to understand why she believes so firmly that it was her fault may help her begin to shift this belief and to let go of some of the shame and the guilt. You could turn to any of the self-help books and look at the section on believing that the abuse was not the survivor's fault. *The Courage to Heal* has particularly clear explanations on this subject, but it is not very easy to read. You may need to summarize the ideas in easier words.

Reading the stories of other survivors and talking about whether she thinks the abuse they describe was their fault can be powerful. If she thinks it was not their fault, you could talk about why she thinks the abuse she experienced was her fault. This may help her to look at shifting her belief that she must be to blame.

The authors of *The Courage to Heal* suggest that a survivor should watch children of the same age they were when they were first abused to help them see that the children could not be responsible for any abuse that happened to them. The learner could then write a supportive letter (not to be sent) to a child who had just been abused. This could lead to talk and writing about the support, or lack of it, that the learner received after she was first abused. The learner could write to herself as a child to tell that child why she is not to blame for the abuse that happened to her.

Work with the consequences

You and the learner may be able to identify many consequences of the abuse which she wants to work to change. Reading any of the workbooks on abuse, such as *The Courage to Heal* may help you both to see what patterns are consequences of the abuse. You may want to choose some issue to work on.

For example, a woman might notice that she is still frequently victimized or that she behaves like a victim. She may say "yes" to things she does not want to do. She may have difficulty standing up to authority figures, or to men she encounters in her life.

To work on this issue you could use any assertiveness exercise, for example, those from *Working Together for Change: Women's Self-Help Handbook* by the Women's Self-Help Network, or you could create an exercise together by creating scenarios with the learner which describe situations which are typical of her life. For each scene you would talk about responses which would name the issue (such responses are often called assertive), responses which would cast blame (these responses are often called aggressive) and responses which ignore or accept the situation rather than addressing it in any way (often called passive). You can discuss the effects of each response on the woman and on others. You will want to be careful to avoid any suggestion that one way of responding is always right, and need to acknowledge that there are situations where a woman cannot "choose" her response. For example she might choose to name the problem but must ignore it because it is safer to remain silent, or she may be so angry at a problem that she can only blame. Exploring the circumstances that lead to different responses and the effects of different responses can lead to many insights about existing patterns and new possibilities.

Another consequence of childhood abuse might be not taking care of herself. She may look after everybody else but not herself. There are many ideas in *The Woman's Comfort Book* which you could look at together and use or adapt so that she could practise taking care of herself.

End each session with care

At the end of every session you will want to take some time to wind down. You need to prepare to return to ordinary life. This is particularly important if you have worked on intense material during the session. Sandra Butler refers to this process as "putting your armor back on" so that a woman can leave able to function in her world safely. Failing to do so can leave the learner (and you, the tutor) in a vulnerable and naked state which puts her at risk when she concludes her time with you.

You might end by talking about how it went and what the learner wants to do next time. Then you could both write in a journal about what you both accomplished during the session. You could read poems together, sing, listen to a tape or whatever else you can think of which gives you both pleasure and allows the strong feelings to subside a little before you both go back to the other demands of life. You may find one particular poem or song becomes a regular favourite, creating a sort of ritual which reminds you both that you are ending your work together for the session. Any material which celebrates the strength of women, or demands that women no longer be hurt, or something that simply makes you laugh, may work to help you leave the work you have done together behind. Poems such as Kate Braid's "Woman's Touch," Marge Piercy's "A Just Anger" or "For Strong Women," or Maxine Tynes' "For the Montreal Fourteen" are all powerful places to end. Reading one of these every time can become a comforting routine.

Mary and I read Kate Braid's "Woman's Touch" at the end of almost every session we work together. We often read something else as well, but she always chooses the last poem, usually "Woman's Touch." The last line "Sam sulked off stomping sawdust," makes us laugh and gives us pleasure in the sound of the words. It shows women as smart (inventing the circular saw, accomplishing things as a carpenter) and spunky (naming that the tools all "look like you know what," holding her own on the building site) and lets us laugh at one man who "loses" in the story.

Take stock

To make sure that the learner is in control of the process of working with her own memories you might want to plan together every few weeks. Talking about how you have worked together and the materials you have used can help a learner talk about what she wants to do more of, and what she doesn't want to do again. This can help the learner control the planning process and her learning.

Telling the learner about the possibilities you can imagine for work you could do together can also help. It is rarely helpful to ask: "What do you want to do?" You must be prepared to offer suggestions of materials to read or look at and ways that you could work together. For example, you might choose several books, videos or exercises which you think might be useful and interesting to her. You could describe each one to the learner and tell her why you thought she might find it useful, marking each one on your list with "yes," "no" or "maybe" according to her response. Then you can come back to the "yes" and "maybe" pieces over the next period. Make sure you check in regularly to see what is and is not working for the learner. Make sure she feels she has permission to say what does and does not feel okay for her.

Every so often you will also want to take stock and see what work you have accomplished together. You might want to celebrate landmarks in some way. You might both want to write about what the learner has taken on and what she feels she has achieved. She could write a letter to herself to remind herself of her achievements. You could keep the letter and send it to her in six months. You could both create a collage as a fun way of noticing where you started in your journey together and where you are now.

It is also important to chart your own progress, insights and feelings in whatever ways work for you. Having a support group with other tutors or staff can help you recognize your own progress and look after yourself too.

The Relationship

Words of advice for a tutor from Mary:

> *If you are going to work with someone who has been through this you have to know they are scared to talk about it. You have to let them know that they can trust you. They may do a lot of things to see if they can trust you. You should not push them to tell you anything they are not ready to tell you about sexual abuse. But as they trust you they will tell you everything. You have to let them know you care what happened to them. Tell them they are not stupid because we think this and think that it was our fault this happened to us. We think we did something to make it happen. You have to have patience with them, like the person I am working with does. When the learner is pushing you it is that they have to do this to feel they have someone to talk to for the first time. You have to let them know it was not their fault and if you have to keep telling them, then that is what you should do. The person I work with tells me all the time that it was not my fault. You have to tell them it is okay to cry. We think it is not okay and have been told not to cry.*

If you make a strong connection with an individual learner, especially if you offer support around issues of violence and bear witness to painful issues in a woman's life, a powerful relationship can develop.

Trust

For a survivor of abuse, trust may be very difficult because trust was violated in the past. So she may test you, over and over again, to check out whether she can trust you, and to check out whether you will walk away from her.

Anger

As she recognizes the abuse that has happened to her and perhaps remembers parts she had buried, she may begin to feel an enormous amount of anger. She may have buried it before, and not dared to show it because the anger of adults that she experienced as a child was dangerous. She may end up being angry at you because you seem to be a safe person to try out what it feels like to recognize her new found feelings of anger. Also, at times, you may be seen as a potential abuser because of your power position of tutor or instructor.

Appreciation

Anger may be hard to take, but so also may be the incredible appreciation for whatever you do in hearing and validating her feelings and her experiences. She may want to give you many gifts. Negotiating what gifts feel all right to you, and working to create equality in the relationship, is very important. It, too, may be an experiment for the learner to explore how to value and respect herself enough to relate to another as an equal. Too much appreciation may be about how little she values herself and you may need to address this.

Terror

Telling another person about her abuse and revealing details of her past which she may have hidden even from herself may be a terrifying experience for the student. She may request that you hear her and then back off. Her slow working through of her issues and her need to return over the same ground may call for a lot of patience.

Bringing memories to the surface may lead her to relive her terror and put her into crisis. Be prepared for many ups and downs.

Believe what you hear

Hearing experiences that are unimaginable to you may bring up issues you need to address. If the accounts seem unbelievable, it is important that you talk to others who work on these issues, or do some reading, to help you to understand that it is true and does happen.

There are many good feminist texts which look at the issue of abuse. A particularly powerful article which addresses the issue of the desire to deny the existence or degree of memories of abuse is Sylvia Fraser's article "Freud's Final Seduction."

A feminist therapist, or a counsellor from a shelter or a community health clinic, may be someone who can offer support and help you think about how you are responding.

Shame and guilt

Most importantly, through any doubts that the woman you are working with may have, you need to hang on to your belief that the abuse was not her fault. Many survivors firmly believe that they were to blame for the abuse. They formed that belief when the abuse happened and so they may find it immensely hard to begin to leave it behind. This belief may lead survivors to feel both shame and guilt.

You may need to tell a woman repeatedly that you don't believe that the abuse was her fault. Never lie to a survivor since she has been lied to by her abuser and can detect insincerity a mile away. However, if you do believe she was responsible, then you need to re-assess your suitability to support a survivor. If you attempt to tell her one thing while believing the opposite she will know you are not being honest and be unable to trust you in other ways.

Keep confidentiality

It is important to think about who you can choose to support you without breaking confidentiality for the woman who is talking to you. If you cannot keep her confidences entirely you must tell the woman so clearly, so that she can decide what she is prepared to tell you, knowing that.

While working with Mary, I found a feminist counsellor, not involved with the literacy program, who was a good support for me. I could tell her in general what I was hearing and check with her whether I was responding helpfully. Before I found that skilled person, I talked to friends in the literacy community for support but, because they knew who I was working with, I was in danger of revealing confidential information.

Last Words

Jenny: *Mary's and my relationship began five years ago with her first comment about her childhood in the women's group. Since that time we have often struggled with all the issues we have discussed in this section. We still meet regularly (once every two weeks) and do the sort of work described in "Literacy Work with Memories." The tensions described here are only one side of the story. It is hard to find words which do not sound trite to describe the enormous amount of learning I have done in this relationship. Working with Mary has demanded an intense honesty, and to get there I have had to reflect and become more honest with myself. Through this work I have been challenged to develop my own analysis of literacy work and this unequal society. Through all the ups and downs, we have built an enormous amount of trust as we have learned to challenge each other and to laugh at ourselves a little.*

Mary: *When working with Jenny I have been able to trust – not everyone – but Jenny. It was hard for me at first, but Jenny kept telling me it was not my fault. I said it was, and she asked me why I thought it was my fault when these people were the ones who did this to me. It was still hard for me to believe that it was not my fault. Jenny and I worked on this and we read things together. I found this really helped me. Since I have worked with Jenny I can put my anger on the ones who deserve it. I got very angry a lot and it was at the wrong ones. When Jenny and I read things out of books she has, I could see it happened to other people. I thought I was the only one this had ever happened to. We read about a lot of people who were sexually abused like me. I would like people like me, that are in literacy because they cannot read and write and have been abused, to get help. Jenny has helped me a lot and I could not ask for someone more understanding than her. Jenny is always there to help me with these things.*

Resources

(See the Bibliography for complete listings.)

* Shows those books which are at a beginning or intermediate reading level

Materials on the issue of violence and learning in the context of memories of violence

Brookes, Anne-Louise. *Feminist Pedagogy: An Autobiographical Approach*

Butler, Sandra. *Conspiracy of Silence: The Trauma of Incest*

Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women. *Isolating the Barriers and Strategies for Prevention: A Kit about Violence and Women's Education for Adult Educators and Adult Learners*

Fraser, Sylvia. "Freud's Final Seduction" in *Saturday Night* (March 1994)

Fraser, Sylvia. *My Father's House*

Gowen, S.G., L. Belcher and C. Barlett. "Friends in the kitchen": Lessons from survivors of domestic violence in a workplace literacy program. Working draft.

Guberman, Connie and Margie Wolfe, eds. *No Safe Place: Violence Against Women and Children*

Hudson, L.P. "Why aren't there more creative women?" In Bass, Ellen and Louise Thornton, eds. *I Never Told Anyone: Writings by Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse*
McBeth, Sally and Vivienne Stollmeyer. "East End Literacy: A Women's Discussion Group" in *Canadian Woman Studies,* 9 (3 & 4)
Miller, Alice. *Breaking Down the Wall of Silence*

Self-help books

*Bass, Ellen and Laura Davis. *Beginning to Heal: A First Book for Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse*
Bass, Ellen and Laura Davis. *The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse*
*Breen, Mary J. *Taking Care: A Handbook about Women's Health*
Davis, Laura. *The Courage to Heal Workbook: For Women and Men Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse*
*Edwards, Tess and Mary D. *Hope in Healing: A Booklet for Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse by Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse*
Gil, Eliana. *Outgrowing the Pain: A Book for and about Adults Abused as Children*
Louden, Jennifer. *The Woman's Comfort Book: A Self-Nurturing Guide for Restoring Balance in Your Life*
*NiCarthy, Ginna and Sue Davidson. *You Can Be Free: An Easy-to-Read Handbook for Abused Women*
*Participatory Research Group. "Violence in the Home," *Women's Kit, Booklet 7*
Tschirhart Sanford, Linda and Mary Ellen Donovan. *Women and Self Esteem: Understanding and Improving the Way We Think and Feel about Ourselves*
Women's Self-Help Network. *Working Together for Change: Women's Self-Help Handbook*

Stories of experiences of violence by learners

*Byrnes, Josie. *Never in a Loving Way*
*Doiron, Rose. *My Name is Rose*
Dueno, Aida, Alma Santiago and Rose Marie De Simone. *It Should Be Told: Oral Histories from the Open Book*
*Fay. *Listen to Me: Talking Survival*
*Green, Ann K. *Coming Out of My Shell*
Hutchinson, Mary and the Doris Women's Refuge. *Belles Letters: Voices from Homes of Violence*
*Ndaba, Elizabeth. *I Told Myself I Am Going to Learn*
*Nonesuch, Kate and Evelyn Battell, eds. *If You Could See Me Now*
Roa, Edami, Basemah Jaber and Ivan Ramirez. *I See a Part of Myself: Voices from the Community*

Other stories of experience of violence

Allen, Guy et al. *No More Masterpieces: Short Prose by New Writers*
Bass, Ellen and Louise Thornton, eds. *I Never Told Anyone: Writings by Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse*
Capponi, Pat. *Upstairs in the Crazy House: The Life of a Psychiatric Survivor*
*Cawley, Joan and Ruth Diamond. *He Hit Me*
*Christian, Mary Blount. *Just Once*
*Davis, D. *Something Is Wrong at My House: A Book About Parent's Fighting*

Dosanjh, Raminder, Surinder Deo and Surjeet Sidhu. *Spousal Abuse: Experiences of 15 South Asian Canadian Women*
Earle, D., et al. *There and Back: Sharing Our Stories*
*Green, Ann K. *Coming Out of My Shell*
Green, Lilian. *Ordinary Wonders: Living Recovery from Sexual Abuse*
Head, Bessie. *The Collector of Treasures*
*Ludwig, Susan E. *After You Tell*
*McFall, Karen. *Pat King's Family*
*Paris, Susan. *Mommy and Daddy Are Fighting*
*Ribaudo, Linda and Darlyne Walker. *Domestic Violence*
Spring, Jacqueline. *Cry Hard and Swim: The Story of an Incest Survivor*
Voices of Aboriginal Women: Aboriginal Women Speak Out About Violence
**The Westcoast Reader: Special Issue on Wife Abuse*. March 1995

Poetry

Poetry, not only about abuse, but poems about strong women and other poems which can be read as part of a process of returning to the world after working on memories of abuse:

Allen, Lillian. *Women Do This Every Day: Selected Poems of Lillian Allen*, especially "Nellie Belly Swelly," "Hold on Sister," "Every Child is Different"
Braid, Kate. *Covering Rough Ground*, especially "A Woman's Touch"
brandt, di. (1992). *Mother, Not Mother*
Piercy, Marge. *To Be of Use*, especially "A Just Anger," "A Work of Artifice"
Piercy, Marge. (1986). *The Moon is Always Female*, especially "For Strong Women"
Tynes, Maxine N. *Woman Talking Woman*, especially "For the Montreal Fourteen"
Tynes, Maxine N. *Borrowed Beauty*
Wallace, Bronwen. *The Stubborn Particulars of Grace*

Song

Songs about violence and recovery:
Allen, Lillian. "Nellie Belly Swelly" on *Revolutionary Tea Party*
Joyce, Moon. "Lying in the Bed I Made" (a song about a battered woman) on *The Infinite Edge*
Kaldor, Connie. "One Hit" (song about leaving a violent relationship) and "Rage Inside" on *Gentle of Heart*
Chapman, Tracy. "Behind the Wall" on *Tracy Chapman*
Morgan, Pam. "Survivor," "Enid and Me" on *Survivor* (a whole cassette of songs for survivors)
Field, Jane. "A Cautionary Tale or Aren't You Glad That You Know Wen-do" on *The Fishing Is Free*
Mantle, Arlene. "Little One," "Coming Home," Nothin's Gonna Keep Us Down," on *Full Circle*

Film

The Colour Purple
National Film Board Films:
- *Sandra's Garden*
- *Where Angels Dare*
- *The Crown Prince*
- *To a Safer Place*

1. Daily Lives

by *Janet Isserlis*

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photo: Moon Joyce

Introduction

This chapter outlines a process of developing topics and support materials for beginning level literacy and EAL learners. It suggests ways of developing lessons for learners with more oral language ability, and basic processes for generating input from learners about day-to-day life. The chapter includes suggestions for eliciting input from learners with a range of abilities in both spoken and written English. The purposes of this chapter are:

- to enable women to use and learn spoken and written language in the process of identifying and exploring issues of importance in their lives;
- to suggest processes of seeking and utilizing learner input;
- to encourage women to find and share their voices;
- to provide resource materials, and suggestions for using them.

The ideas suggested in this chapter are designed for small group tutoring sessions of one and a half to two hours each. Some topics may require a number of sessions, depending on the interests and abilities of the group. Topics are framed by generative questions. With beginning learners, these questions might be easier to ask if a visual prompt is first introduced. For example, in the case of everyday events, the photo on page 32 could be shown to the group.

Attentive listening to and observation of learners' responses is important in shaping subsequent oral and written language work, and in giving learners control of this work and content.

Learners may not be willing to talk about a particular topic at the moment, but may want to come back to it. As well, some topics, such as family, may be loaded for refugees, immigrants, lesbians and gay men and people who are suffering abuse, or have in the past.

A. A Typical Day

Using a specific image to begin the unit helps to encourage learners to talk about their experience (in this case, thinking about being at school, working and learning with others). As beginning level learners first speak and use vocabulary that they know, the next steps – reading and writing this language – are put into a context. Learners already have a sense of what they will be reading and writing, because the oral work has enabled them to use the words they know, and maybe, also, to learn new words from classmates.

The word "typical" might be unfamiliar to some learners. Other words or phrases, such as "every day," or a "regular" day might help learners to think about what it is they do from day to day, in order to begin discussions. Starting with day-to-day activities (a relatively impersonal topic) allows learners to talk as much or little as they like about things they do and people and things that are important to them. As learners get to know each other, they can decide how deeply they want to discuss issues in their own lives related to the topic.

1. Guided discussion

➤ Begin by showing the learners a photograph, such as the one shown here. Ask learners what they see in the photo. With very beginning level learners, the process of writing observations (on the blackboard or flip chart) might take an entire class session.

A group of learners in the Rainmaker Project, in Vancouver. Parents of children at Macdonald Elementary School participate in language and literacy work at the school, in a classroom shared by children using computers.

photo: Janet Isserlis

➤ Learners can first describe what they see, and then talk about the range of issues that arise when we think about women's concerns and educational opportunities abroad and in Canada. Some questions to consider:

- Tell me about the picture. What do you see?
- Who is in the picture?
- What are they doing? Where are they?
- What do you know about the people in the picture?
- What questions do you have about the people in the picture?

Sample responses:

I see ____.

They are ____.

They ____.

➤ Move from questions about a specific image, or a reading related to that image, to questions about what people do at home, about the people in their households, or about very general activities.

- What do you do every day?
- What do you do in the morning?
- What do you do on Saturday?
- What do you do on Sunday?

Sample responses:

Every day, I take care of my children. On Saturday I go shopping.

Every day, I cook food for my family. On Saturday I go downtown.

Every day, I take care of my mother. On Sunday I go to church.

Every day I have to ______________________________.

Everyday I want to ______________________________.

In the morning, I wake up. I brush my teeth. I cook for my grandchildren.

Tutors might begin with photos of their own friends or family, or with photos taken from magazines. As learners come to know one another, they should be encouraged to begin to share their own photos; learners' photos provide the best starts for discussions.

As learners talk about the photos, and make guesses about what is in them, tutors can assess how much vocabulary learners have already acquired, and can help fill in gaps.

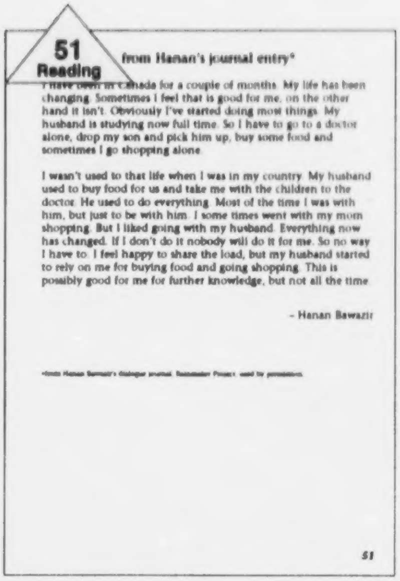
In the morning, I cook food for my family. I walk with my children to school.

These questions are not to be followed necessarily in this sequence. Teach and review grammar forms as necessary, or make a note of what is needed for later work. Take the time to follow conversations. For example, "What do you cook?" could lead to a discussion on shopping, prices and bargains.

- What do you usually do during the week? on week days?
- Are your weekend days any different from days during the week? How?
- What is a "typical" day like for you?
- Do you have typical days?
- How would describe the day you had yesterday? the day you're having today?
- What are your daily joys?
- What are headaches or problems?
- What do you do in Canada (in this province)?
- What do you usually do in your home country (home province)?
- What are things you **have** to do every day?
- What are things you **want** to do?
- What do you like about your days?
- What things would you like to change? How would you change them?

2. Reading: "Hanan's Journal"

Hanan's journal entry (page 51) may be useful in encouraging women to discuss and write about their own experiences.



51
Reading

from Hanan's journal entry*

I have been in Canada for a couple of months. My life has been changing. Sometimes I feel that is good for me, on the other hand it isn't. Obviously I've started doing most things. My husband is studying now full time. So I have to go to a doctor alone, drop my son and pick him up, buy some food and sometimes I go shopping alone.

I wasn't used to that life when I was in my country. My husband used to buy food for us and take me with the children to the doctor. He used to do everything. Most of the time I was with him, but just to be with him. I some times went with my mom shopping. But I liked going with my husband. Everything now has changed. If I don't do it nobody will do it for me. So no way I have to. I feel happy to share the load, but my husband started to rely on me for buying food and going shopping. This is possibly good for me for further knowledge, but not all the time.

- Hanan Bawazir

*[illegible]

51

3. Writing

➤ After reading Hanan's journal entry, ask learners to respond to what she has written. Some questions to consider, to help bridge Hanan's experience to those of the learners:

- What tasks do you do in Canada that you didn't do before?
- How did you learn to do this new work?
- How do you feel about these changes?

➤ If learners are willing to share their writing, the discussion about it may lead naturally into the next topic.

B. Getting Help, Giving Help

1. Guided discussion

➤ Some questions to consider:
- What things do you feel you want help with?
- Who can help you? Who do you want to ask for help?
- Is it easy or difficult to ask for help?
- How do you ask other people for help? How do they ask you?
- When do you need help? Who can help you in an emergency?
- When can you help other friends or people in your family?

2. Reading: "Our Lives in Canada"

➤ With the learners, read "Our Lives in Canada" (page 52).

➤ In pairs, or small groups, learners can discuss these questions and report back to the larger group:
- How did the writer feel about her experiences as a newcomer to Canada?
- Have you had any of the same experiences she had?
- What advice would you give to someone who is just arriving in your town/city/province?

52
Reading

Our Lives in Canada*

Canada is a beautiful country but our first few years here were very difficult because we didn't speak the language. We felt isolated and many of us didn't have any family in Canada. We had difficulty finding housing because we have small children. Many of us were forced to leave our children at home with our husbands in order to work. One of us went out to work after only two days in Canada. Also, we were moving from small towns into a large city, and life was so difficult for us.

* from Our Lives by Jean Unda et al. Toronto Board of Education. Used by permission.

52

The reading from *Our Lives* (by Jean Unda and a writing team of participants and instructors) might generate discussion and help learners to think of other things they'd like to write about their own lives. The reading could also help frame conversations about resettlement experiences for learners who are not Canadian-born, and may also, in mixed groups of learners, facilitate discussion and sharing of perceptions among immigrant/refugee and Canadian-born learners.

3. Writing

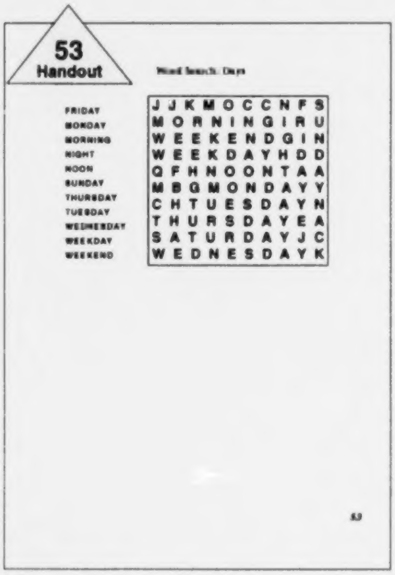
➤ Some suggested topics:
- Make a list of good advice for newcomers.
- When I first came to Canada . . .
- Make facts sheets covering specific information (transportation, visiting the doctor, emergency procedures).
- Make a handbook for newcomers to the neighbourhood.

The last two topics are large projects for a group to take on, but would lead to many opportunities for talking, asking questions, reading, writing and publishing, as well as giving learners an opportunity to make life easier for newcomers.

4. Word search

➤ Give learners a copy of the word search "Days" (page 53).

Some learners enjoy word puzzles, while other may not like them. Software programs which make word searches can be borrowed from many school systems; as well, you or your learners may enjoy making up your own.



53
Handout

Word Search: Days

FRIDAY
MONDAY
MORNING
NIGHT
NOON
SUNDAY
THURSDAY
TUESDAY
WEDNESDAY
WEEKDAY
WEEKEND

J J K M O C C N F S
M O R N I N G I R U
W E E K E N D G I N
W E E K D A Y H D D
Q F H N O O N T A A
M B G M O N D A Y Y
C H T U E S D A Y N
T H U R S D A Y E A
S A T U R D A Y J C
W E D N E S D A Y K

53

C. Family

1. Brainstorm

Learners can discuss their families, and feelings about their families, in various ways, disclosing as little or as much as is comfortable. For some learners, circumstances leading to immigration to Canada, or previous negative experiences with family members may make this a difficult topic to pursue. Alice Li (in "Cultural Awareness Activities") suggests that as an alternative, if discussions about family are difficult, to look at cultural views of child raising: How are boys and girls raised in Canada? In learners' home countries?

➤ One way to begin might be to write the word "family" on the blackboard or flip chart, and invite learners to contribute whatever ideas come to mind. These contributions could include both single word and/or longer contributions. For example:

WHO IS MY FAMILY?

mother
sisters
cousins
my aunt
relatives
children
brothers
mother-in-law

family are people you grow up with

my children are my family

Some of this information may have emerged during the discussion of day-to-day life, if the group began with that section.

2. Making a grid

Another approach to working with people whose literacy skills are at the beginning level is to create a grid where learners can complete basic information. Such a grid is one way to move from discussion to reading and writing.

➤ Make the blank grid on the blackboard, or on a large piece of paper which can later be hung on the wall.

➤ Once the format for the grid has been established, most learners can write in the information about themselves, or take turns asking one another for information and writing it in.

The tutor should also add her own information to the grid.

Name	Age	comes from	wants to	children	others in the household
Juliana	24	El Salvador	work in a library	3: 2 boys, 1 girl	husband
Rosa	29	Mexico	find her own apartment	none	mother and father
Jaclyn	31	Ontario	help her children with their school work	2, 1 boy, 1 girl	partner
Maria	25	Panama	get her children back from foster care	3	roommate
Anna	47	Quebec	improve her English and work in a clothing shop	1 grandson	husband and daughter

3. Using the grid

➤ Start by asking and answering questions based on the grid. The tutor can model the first few questions, until learners are ready to ask one another themselves. Depending on the abilities of the group, and the focus of the lesson, the questions can also serve to introduce new vocabulary, such as "most," "youngest," "oldest," etc.:

- Who has a grandchild?
- Who has the most children?
- Who has two children?
- Who wants to work in a clothing shop?
- Who lives with her parents?
- How many children does _______________ have?
- How old is Juliana?

4. Beyond the grid

➤ Invite learners to ask one another about information that hasn't been included in the grid. For example:

- How old are Juliana's children?
- How old are Silvia's children?
- Does anyone have children in school? What grades?
- What questions do you want to ask someone else about their family?
- Do you want to say anything else about your family?

➤ Reproduce the grid, but omit certain information in the grid itself, and include that missing information in sentence form below the grid. Leave blanks in the sentences, which can be filled in from information still on the grid.

➤ Ask learners to complete the grid and the sentences. They will probably remember many of the answers from the discussion in class.

1. ______________ comes from El Salvador. She has 3

children, ________ boys and _______ girl.

2. ______________ comes from Mexico. She lives with

her mother and father.

Name Age	comes from	wants to	children	others in household
24	El Salvador	work in a library		husband
29	Mexico	find her own apartment	none	mother and father

Here the grid becomes a springboard for questions and more discussion which might emerge as a result of asking and answering these questions.

To make the assignment more difficult, put the sentences in random order.

For some learners, although they understand the information and are familiar with the content, the grid and sentences could present real challenges. If and as appropriate, it can be helpful to encourage learners to work together in pairs or small groups (depending on the size of the group overall) to complete the writing work.

Other headings can be used for the grid within or beyond the category of families – such as children's grades and schools, learners' dates and places of birth, favourite foods, first languages, household tasks and learning goals.

54
Reading

Rose*

ph. I am a Native Indian from Portage, about 76 kilometres from Fort St. James. In our village we have about 153 people living there. I have six children. My oldest is 18 years old and has a child. I'm 35 years old and I've been going to ABE for about three years. I'm trying hard to get my Grade 12. Besides my ABE school, I'm a part time teacher's assistant. I work from 8 to 12 p.m. and go to school from 1 to 8 p.m. My mother watches the children while I work and go to school.

- Rose Joseph

Rose says about herself, "I like to read Voices magazines, that's why I wrote this." Rose is a learner at Portage School near Fort St. James, B.C.

54

5. Reading: "Rose"

➤ Some words in Rose's story (page 54) may be unfamiliar to learners. Before reading the story together, the facilitator may write up to five words on the blackboard or flip chart to get a sense of who's familiar with which words. Likely words might include "native," "village," "Portage," "assistant."

➤ Based on the words used in the sight word list, learners can guess what (or who) the story could be about. Or, the tutor might tell them that the story is about a woman who is going to school, and see if learners are interested in making predictions about who she is and what she has to say about herself. (Does she have children? Where does she live? Is she married or single?)

6. Writing

➤ After reading the story, learners could construct their own stories about what might have happened to Rose since she wrote the story. Some questions to consider:

- Did Rose finish Grade 12?
- Did she find a job?
- Is she happy?
- What does she like to do?
- What do Rose's children think about her when they're young?
- What do Rose's children think about her as they grow up?
- Where is their father?

Learners can be encouraged to write about their own experiences. It may take time for learners to feel comfortable writing and sharing stories, but if one or two learners start to bring in writing, others will follow.

7. Making a cluster

➤ The tutor (or one of the learners) writes the words "family issues" on the blackboard or flip chart, and the group then brainstorms and clusters ideas around the words.

responsibilities — looking after children
problems with parents' health
too many relatives living in my house
need to send money home
miss holiday times together

family issues

support from my sisters
help with cooking
children should know their grandparents

8. Writing

➤ Having generated and written words about family on the blackboard, and worked with the grid, learners may want to do some language experience writing about people in their households and/or their families.

9. Reading: "Something about My Life"

Topics raised during the clustering work may lead the group to do some paragraph writing, or pursue readings about particular aspects of family life, such as this one. Dominga Caballero's story about her life ties together many of the day-to-day and larger concerns that may arise through discussion within this chapter.

➤ Ask learners to read Dominga's story (page 55) in small groups and to talk about their reactions to her story. Some questions to consider:

- What is the relationship between Dominga and her daughter?
- What are the differences between Dominga and her father?
- What might Dominga want to tell her father if she had the opportunity now?

Clustering is one way of making **brainstorming** a bit more organized visually, by clustering similar ideas together.

Another discussion topic could include varying expectations for male and female children. Are learners' expectations for their children different between genders? Have immigrants' expectations about boys and girls shifted since coming to Canada? (See also "Cultural Awareness Activities" page 133.)

55
Reading

Something about My Life*

My story begins many years ago when I was a student in my country. I was only twelve years old and I was the best student in my class because I always liked to study a lot. I got the highest score in my class and the school gave me a scholarship.

I was very happy and very excited because I wanted to be a doctor, but my father said, "No, you don't need to study more because you are a girl. Only boys need to study more." I felt frustrated and I cried a lot. Then, I had to work to help my family. I thought that when I had a daughter, she would be a doctor.

Several years after I got married, I came to this country. A few months later, I had my first child. She was a girl! Five years later, I had a boy. I worked very hard in a factory for twenty years. It was all to help raise our children.

During those twenty years I thought about my daughter and my wish. One year ago my daughter got her Bachelor of Science Degree in Biology from a university. It was at that time I decided to learn English because when she brought her friends to our home I felt embarrassed since I couldn't talk with them.

Now, I want to stay in school. I want to get my high school diploma. If God helps us, my daughter, who is now twenty-two years old and a very intelligent girl, will go to medical school in September.

– Dominga Caballero

55

10. Writing

➤ When learners have finished discussing the story, ask them to write their own story, something about their lives. One way to start the writing process might be to use the first words in each of Dominga's paragraphs:

My story begins ______________________________

I was very ___________________________________

Several years after I __________________________

During those years ____________________________

Now, I want to ______________________________

D. Neighbourhood

1. Guided discussion

➤ Using the blackboard to record answers for the whole group, or asking learners to divide into pairs, find out:

- Who lives alone?
- Who lives with a partner?
- Who lives with roommates or friends?
- Who lives with family including [grand] children?
- Who lives in a house? an apartment? a trailer?
- Who lives in a city? a village? on a reserve?

One way of moving from learners' immediate friends and family is through talking and writing about the environment(s) in which they work, study and live their lives.

➤ Invite learners to discuss their homes, their neighbourhoods and the things that occur there every day. Some questions to consider:

- What do you see in your neighbourhood that makes you happy? sad? angry?
- What surprises you in your neighbourhood?
- What, if anything, would you change about your neighbourhood?

2. Collages, maps and other visuals

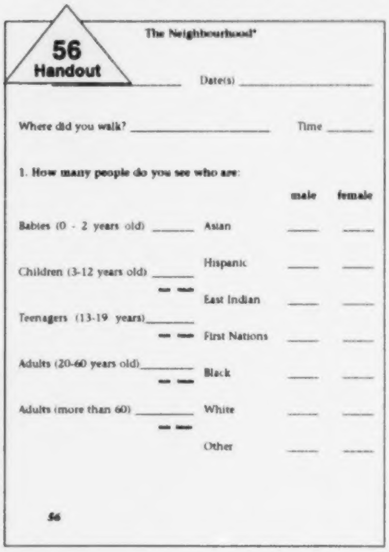
➤ Map reading is a skill needed in a number of connections. Making a map of the area surrounding the learning centre or meeting place is one way of developing that skill; as well, map making gives learners more information about the area. The group could go on a walkabout and discuss what they have seen – shops, bus stops, offices, parks, etc. The tutor can make the basic framework for the map and have learners complete and label it, or learners can make the entire map themselves. They can then be asked to generate maps of the areas immediately surrounding the places where they live, visit or like to spend time.

➤ Learners can practise reading maps during or after the exercises in map making. There are many maps that the learners or tutor can bring in – transit maps, city maps, maps that advertise particular businesses, road maps and so on. Some things to do:

- Ask each learner to trace the route she takes to school or work, or to mark all the places she goes in the course of a day, week or month.
- On one map, mark all the learners' homes. Which learners live close to one another? Who has the farthest to come to school? Which learners live on the same bus or subway route?

3. A neighbourhood survey

➤ Ask learners to fill in the survey form (pages 56 – 57).



56 Handout

The Neighbourhood*

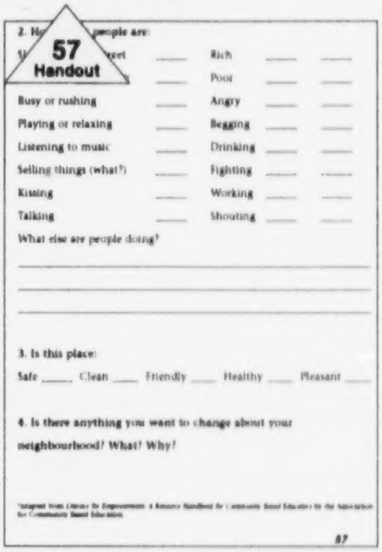
Date(s) ________

Where did you walk? ________ Time ________

1. How many people do you see who are:

			male	female
Babies (0 - 2 years old) ______		Asian	____	____
Children (3-12 years old) ______		Hispanic	____	____
		East Indian	____	____
Teenagers (13-19 years) ______		First Nations	____	____
Adults (20-60 years old) ______		Black	____	____
Adults (more than 60) ______		White	____	____
		Other	____	____

56



57 Handout

2. H people are:

eet	____	Rich	____	____
	____	Poor	____	____
Busy or rushing	____	Angry	____	____
Playing or relaxing	____	Begging	____	____
Listening to music	____	Drinking	____	____
Selling things (what?)	____	Fighting	____	____
Kissing	____	Working	____	____
Talking	____	Shouting	____	____

What else are people doing?

3. Is this place:

Safe ____ Clean ____ Friendly ____ Healthy ____ Pleasant ____

4. Is there anything you want to change about your neighbourhood? What? Why?

57

The neighbourhood survey can be done in two ways. The entire group could go out together to make the observations, or learners can be asked to make these observations over time, for example, making note of things they observe in the neighbourhood at different times of day, over a period of several days.

➤ After the data is collected, see if opinions among learners are similar or different. Ask if friends, or others in their households, share learners' opinions and observations of their neighbourhoods, or if they have different ideas about the people and environment in their neighbourhoods.

➤ After discussing their findings, you may want to invite local representatives, service workers and others to discuss questions and problems, if any, that arise from the survey, such as:

- Why is this neighbourhood unsafe?
- When is the trash collected? Why isn't it collected regularly?
- Where are the public telephones? Why aren't more streetlights working?

➤ Follow-up work could include letters to local newspapers reporting on problems and/or solutions to particular issues in the community.

4. Reading: "Church"

Florence Wright's story may encourage women to look at ways in which support may already exist for them within their communities and/or how they might work to build better support networks themselves.

➤ Read the story (page 58) with the group.

Another book, *Two Old Women*, by Velma Walls, speaks powerfully to women's strength and solidarity, and against ageism, and presents a very different perspective on day-to-day survival.

58
Reading

Church*

en I go to church on Sunday morning. The excitement is getting up early, about 5:00 or 6:00, fixing Sunday dinner and breakfast, dressing and leaving the house about 10:45, making church on time, before it starts. When I walk in church it's like a whole new world in there. People meet you with a smile or a hug. It makes you feel like a different person. I am on a committee called Friendship Ministry.

My job is to greet people as they walk in the door, pass out little cards that ask your name, who invited you, your home church and pastor. Sometimes I have to stand up and read those cards. You be scared at first, but when you start to read them you don't be scared no more.

Sometimes I stay at church all day. I feel so good and happy. Lots of times you don't want to leave, but you know you have to come home and back to reality.

- Florence Wright

Florence says about herself, "I am a mother of four children. Three are still living. I started going back to church about a year ago, three weeks before my son died. I love going to church, so I keep on going. I live in C.H.A. (Chicago Housing Authority) on the 11th floor. I have started talking more and writing. I will keep on writing."

58

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E. My Wife Doesn't Work

Work, both paid and unpaid, takes up a huge amount of women's time every day. Use the poster story (page 59) for the following activities.

1. Describing and sequencing

➤ Enlarge the poster and cut it into squares, giving each learner (or group of learners) one or two squares. Ask learners to describe what is happening in each square, and then to discuss and write captions for their squares (working alone or with a partner). For example:
At 6 o'clock she wakes up and goes to get the baby.
At 7 o'clock she makes breakfast for the family.

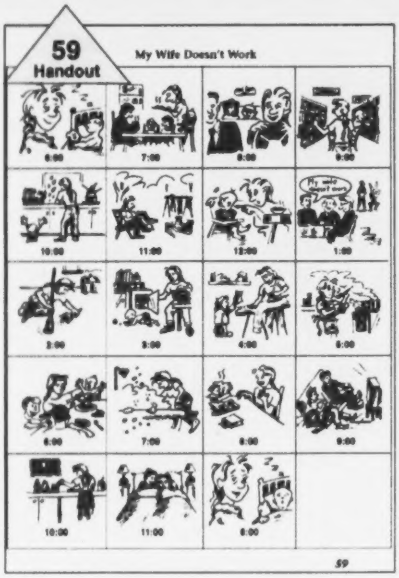
➤ Starting with 6:00 o'clock and working through the day, ask each learner or pair of learners to describe what they see in the drawings, then put the squares in sequence on a large sheet of newsprint.

2. Guided discussion

➤ Some questions to consider:

- What kind of day has this woman had?
- Do you have days like this?
- What are the different kinds of jobs she does in a day?
- What does her husband do?
- Who helps her?
- If she were a paid worker, how much would she be paid an hour for cooking? childcare? housework?
- If she were a friend of yours, what would you tell her? Would you have any advice to give her?

➤ Learners may want to create their own collages, drawings or photomontages to re-create and describe their own day's work in or out of the house.



If it isn't possible to enlarge the drawing, learners can work in pairs or as a group to describe and discuss each square and then to analyze the drawing in its entirety.

A group of nine EAL speakers, all women, talked through the squares in sequence, describing each square and its activity, and asking for new words as needed. A lively discussion ensued, although no one was at all surprised at the amount of time or energy the woman spent in caring for her family.

52

F. Transportation

To do these activities, it will be helpful to have a copy of the book *Getting There: Producing Photostories with Immigrant Women*, by Deborah Barndt, Ferne Cristal and dian marino which contains photo stories of two women's struggles to overcome isolation as newcomers to Canada, as well as a description of the process by which those stories were produced. It also contains discussion about immigrant women and work, and the influence of the media on women and men.

1. Reading: "Gloria's Story"

➤ Pre-reading work can focus on discussion and attention to sight words, and prediction. Helpful starting questions could include:

- How long have you lived here? in this city? in Canada?
- How did you feel when you first arrived? How do you feel now?
- What do you like about living here?
- Is it difficult to go out to shop? to work? to visit friends?
- How do you get around?

➤ For learners who have been together for a while, it may be interesting to do some brainstorming or clustering around the words "isolation" or "transportation."

➤ "Read" the photos, if you have a copy of *Getting There.*

Start by covering the text and ask learners to tell the story as they see it through the photos, or you may choose a related image (photo or drawing) and ask learners to talk about that image.

photo: Deborah Barndt

➤ Read and discuss "Gloria's Story" (pages 60 – 61).

60
Reading

Gloria's Story*

d as a sales clerk. But life was hard there. There were not many jobs and we did not earn enough money. So we decided to try a new life in a new country.

When I first came to Toronto from Ecuador, my husband helped me look for a job. I found a job in a garment factory.

For the first three days, my husband went with me to show me the way. On the fourth day he said, "You're on your own."

And so, I had to go on the subway alone. It was very confusing for me. I was afraid.

I paid for my ticket and got my change.

I knew I had to get a transfer to go from the subway to the bus.

On my way I checked the map. I didn't understand it very well.

I wasn't sure what the signs said, so I tried to remember which way I had gone with my husband.

I was feeling so nervous I almost cried.

Everywhere I looked there were signs.

I still wasn't sure if I was going in the right direction, but I got on the train anyway.

I checked the maps again.

I was looking at the people and I was looking at the signs.

I wasn't sure what the signs said. But I watched very carefully.

60

61
Reading

cognize the pictures anymore, I knew I had missed

A woman who saw I was lost offered to help me. I told her which station I needed to get to work. She gave me directions and came with me.

I was very lucky because she spoke my language. I felt calmer. I was glad to find someone to talk to.

I was relieved to get off the subway, and come back upstairs to the street.

I knew I was late so I ran to catch the bus. But as I got off the bus my heart sank. I had gone the wrong way again.

The signs around me weren't familiar. I re-traced my steps and finally found the factory. I felt much better. At last I could begin my day's work.

61

The author's experiences in "Gloria's Story" have been shared by many women. In the story, Gloria negotiates a complex public transit system, encountering print she can't read, taking the wrong subway, finding help, until she finally reaches her destination – her new place of employment. The book provides useful resources for discussion and further writing and reading activity not only about women and work, but also about the challenges women face when confronting new situations.

2. Guided discussion

➤ These questions may help learners frame continued discussions about some of the issues that arise in the text:

Gloria's Story

- What did Gloria need to be able to do to get to work?
- Did she have a problem? What was the problem?
- What did she do about the problem in the story?
- What do you think she did the next day – did she have trouble finding her way to work again?
- What would have happened if Gloria hadn't got there?

Gloria and her husband

- Do you think Gloria had to rely on her husband to find a job in Ecuador?
- How do you think she feels when he has to show her the way to work?
- Do you think their relationship has changed since they've come to Canada? How? Why?

After reading the story, learners will probably have similar stories of their own to share. For those learners who find little in common with the story, you might want to ask them to share their own stories about how they do manage to function and get around, and perhaps ask them to write some advice for others new to the town.

Suggestions for approaches to a deeper analysis of the problems of isolation and issues of women and work appear in *Getting There.*

On the bus

- Who do you think Gloria was likely to see on the bus?
- How do you think Gloria's bus driver gets to work?
- How does Gloria's husband get to work?

Public transit

- Who do you usually see when you use public transit?
- Who don't you often see on public transit? Why?
- Where do people here live? How do they get to school/work/shopping centres?
- What's public transit like in our area? Affordable? Convenient?
- If we have problems with transit, what can we do about them?
- What happens when no public transit is available? How do people get around?

3. Other activities

➤ Write, read or tell stories about transit problems, risks to security, personal safety.

➤ Write, read or tell stories about transit successes.

➤ Make a guidebook or pamphlet about using public transit, carpools or getting around your community.

➤ Research transit information – call for information, read schedules, find out who already knows about public transit among the learners.

➤ Learn about drivers' manuals and how to get a driver's licence.

➤ Find out about buying a car.

➤ Make stories and collages using pictures from magazines.

➤ If you have access to camera and film (and funds for photo processing), learners may wish to create their own photo stories.

East End Literacy and The Moment Project have also produced very reasonably priced reading materials which combine photos and text. (See Resources on page 49.) As important as it is for learners to produce their own stories and materials, it is also important for them to be able to read new information, from other sources, as part of the overall process of becoming independent readers and writers.

Resources

(See the Bibliography for complete listings.)

Materials for learners

Barndt, Deborah, Ferne Cristall and dian marino. *Getting There: Producing Photostories with Immigrant Women*

Magy, Ronna. *Stories from the Heart: A Reading and Writing Book for Adults*
Compiled writings from refugee and immigrant EAL language learners in U.S. adult education programs

New Start Reading Series. East End Literacy Press
Very easy books (often only one or two sentences per page) written by learners at East End Literacy, Toronto.

Unda, Jean, et al. *Our Lives*
A compilation of stories by Portuguese-speaking EAL students in Toronto.

Vancouver Status of Women. *Vancouver and Lower Mainland Single Mothers' Resource Guide.*
Clearly written and well-formatted guide covering housing, childcare, welfare, education and training, legal assistance, support services, free and cheap activities/goods.

Walls, Verna. *Two Old Women: An Alaskan Legend of Betrayal, Courage and Survival*

Periodicals

The Westcoast Reader
Free to publicly funded institutions in B.C. *The Westcoast Reader* is for adults "who are improving their English reading skills." Each issue contains articles written at three levels of complexity, and also includes excellent graphics and photos.

On Our Way. Wanda Huron, ed.
A plain English newspaper for people "who want to improve their English reading skills." In addition to articles written by staff, learner and tutor input is encouraged, and each issue is devoted to a different theme.

Journal of Ordinary Thought
This journal "publishes reflections people make on their personal histories and everyday experiences. It is founded on the propositions that every person is a philosopher, expressing one's thoughts fosters creativity and change, and taking control of life requires people to think about the world and communicate the thoughts to others. JOT strives to be a vehicle for reflection, communication and change."

Voices: New Writers for New Readers
Writings by learners from around the world.

Readings for tutors and literacy workers

Arnold, Rick, et al. *Educating for a Change: A Handbook for Community Educators*

Association for Community Based Education. *Literacy for Empowerment: A Resource Handbook for Community Based Educators*

Auerbach, Elsa R. *Making Meaning, Making Change: A Guide to Participatory Curriculum Development for Adult ESL and Family Literacy*

Bell, Jill and Barbara Burnaby. *A Handbook for ESL Literacy*
Compiled journal writings from students and teachers in two women's studies programs in Vancouver, including documentation of and reflections on the processes of generating, collecting and sharing these writings.
Nash, Andrea, et al. *Talking Shop: A Curriculum Sourcebook for Participatory Adult ESL*
Putnam, Dana, et al, eds. *The Journal Project: Dialogues and Conversations inside Women's Studies*
Wallerstein, Nina. *Language and Culture in Conflict: Problem-posing in the ESL Classroom*

Resource centres

Alpha Ontario
The Literacy and Language Training Resource Centre
21 Park Road,
Toronto, Ontario
M4W 2N1
1(800) 363-0007

Goodwill Literacy
1400 South Lane Street
Seattle, Washington
98144-2889 U.S.A.
(206) 329-1000
(learner-generated writing; tutor handbooks)

International Council for Adult Education
720 Bathurst Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5S 2R4
(416) 588-1211
(*Convergence*)

The Moment Project
Jesuit Centre
947 Queen Street East,
Toronto, Ontario
M4M 1J9
(416) 469-1123, fax: (416) 469-3579

Ontario Literacy Coalition
365 Bloor Street East, Suite #1003
Toronto, Ontario
M4W 3L4
(416)963-5787

Hanan's journal entry

I have been in Canada for a couple of months. My life has been changing. Sometimes I feel that is good for me, on the other hand it isn't. Obviously I've started doing most things. My husband is studying now full time. So I have to go to a doctor alone, drop my son and pick him up, buy some food and sometimes I go shopping alone.

I wasn't used to that life when I was in my country. My husband used to buy food for us and take me with the children to the doctor. He used to do everything. Most of the time I was with him, but just to be with him. I some times went with my mom shopping. But I liked going with my husband. Everything now has changed. If I don't do it nobody will do it for me. So no way I have to. I feel happy to share the load, but my husband started to rely on me for buying food and going shopping. This is possibly good for me for further knowledge, but not all the time.

– Hanan Bawazir

From Hanan Bawazir's dialogue journal. Rainmaker Project. Used by permission.

Our Lives in Canada

Canada is a beautiful country but our first few years here were very difficult because we didn't speak the language. We felt isolated and many of us didn't have any family in Canada. We had difficulty finding housing because we have small children. Many of us were forced to leave our children at home with our husbands in order to work. One of us went out to work after only two days in Canada. Also, we were moving from small towns into a large city, and life was so difficult for us.

From *Our Lives* by Jean Unda et al. Toronto Board of Education. Used by permission.

Word Search: Days

FRIDAY
MONDAY
MORNING
NIGHT
NOON
SUNDAY
THURSDAY
TUESDAY
WEDNESDAY
WEEKDAY
WEEKEND

J	J	K	M	O	C	C	N	F	S
M	O	R	N	I	N	G	I	R	U
W	E	E	K	E	N	D	G	I	N
W	E	E	K	D	A	Y	H	D	D
Q	F	H	N	O	O	N	T	A	A
M	B	G	M	O	N	D	A	Y	Y
C	H	T	U	E	S	D	A	Y	N
T	H	U	R	S	D	A	Y	E	A
S	A	T	U	R	D	A	Y	J	C
W	E	D	N	E	S	D	A	Y	K

Rose

My name is Rose Joseph. I am a Native Indian from Portage, about 76 kilometres from Fort St. James. In our village we have about 153 people living there. I have six children. My oldest is 18 years old and has a child. I'm 35 years old and I've been going to ABE for about three years. I'm trying hard to get my Grade 12. Besides my ABE school, I'm a part time teacher's assistant. I work from 8 to 12 p.m. and go to school from 1 to 8 p.m. My mother watches the children while I work and go to school.

– Rose Joseph

Rose says about herself, "I like to read *Voices* magazines, that's why I wrote this." Rose is a learner at Portage School near Fort St. James, B.C.

From *Voices: New Writers for New Readers*, Issue 13, Volume 5, Number 2, Spring 1993. Used by permission.

Something about My Life

My story begins many years ago when I was a student in my country. I was only twelve years old and I was the best student in my class because I always liked to study a lot. I got the highest score in my class and the school gave me a scholarship.

I was very happy and very excited because I wanted to be a doctor, but my father said, "No, you don't need to study more because you are a girl. Only boys need to study more." I felt frustrated and I cried a lot. Then, I had to work to help my family. I thought that when I had a daughter, she would be a doctor.

Several years after I got married, I came to this country. A few months later, I had my first child. She was a girl! Five years later, I had a boy. I worked very hard in a factory for twenty years. It was all to help raise our children.

During those twenty years I thought about my daughter and my wish. One year ago my daughter got her Bachelor of Science Degree in Biology from a university. It was at that time I decided to learn English because when she brought her friends to our home I felt embarrassed since I couldn't talk with them.

Now, I want to stay in school. I want to get my high school diploma. If God helps us, my daughter, who is now twenty-two years old and a very intelligent girl, will go to medical school in September.

– Dominga Caballero

From *Stories from the Heart: A Reading and Writing Book for Adults,* by Ronna Magy. Linmore Publishing, Box 1545 Palatine, IL 60078. Used by permission.

The Neighbourhood

Name ______________________ Date(s) ______________________

Where did you walk? ______________________ Time _________

1. How many people do you see who are:

Babies (0 - 2 years old) ________
male female

Children (3-12 years old) ________
male female

Teenagers (13-19 years)________
male female

Adults (20-60 years old)__________
male female

Adults (more than 60) __________
male female

	male	**female**
Asian	_______	_______
Hispanic	_______	_______
East Indian	_______	_______
First Nations	_______	_______
Black	_______	_______
White	_______	_______
Other	_______	_______

2. How many people are:

			male	female
Sleeping on the street	______	Rich	______	______
With friends or family	______	Poor	______	______
Busy or rushing	______	Angry	______	______
Playing or relaxing	______	Begging	______	______
Listening to music	______	Drinking	______	______
Selling things (what?)	______	Fighting	______	______
Kissing	______	Working	______	______
Talking	______	Shouting	______	______

What else are people doing?

____

____

____

3. Is this place:

Safe ______ Clean _____ Friendly _____ Healthy _____ Pleasant _____

4. Is there anything you want to change about your neighbourhood? What? Why?

Adapted from *Literacy for Empowerment: A Resource Handbook for Community Based Educators* by the Association for Community Based Education.

Church

My favorite time is when I go to church on Sunday morning. The excitement is getting up early, about 5:00 or 6:00, fixing Sunday dinner and breakfast, dressing and leaving the house about 10:45, making church on time, before it starts. When I walk in church it's like a whole new world in there. People meet you with a smile or a hug. It makes you feel like a different person. I am on a committee called Friendship Ministry.

My job is to greet people as they walk in the door, pass out little cards that ask your name, who invited you, your home church and pastor. Sometimes I have to stand up and read those cards. You be scared at first, but when you start to read them you don't be scared no more.

Sometimes I stay at church all day. I feel so good and happy. Lots of times you don't want to leave, but you know you have to come home and back to reality.

– Florence Wright

Florence says about herself, "I am a mother of four children. Three are still living. I started going back to church about a year ago, three weeks before my son died. I love going to church, so I keep on going. I live in C.H.A. (Chicago Housing Authority) on the 11th floor. I have started talking more and writing. I will keep on writing."

Florence's writing appeared in the *Journal of Ordinary Thought*, #10, March 1995. Used by permission.

My Wife Doesn't Work

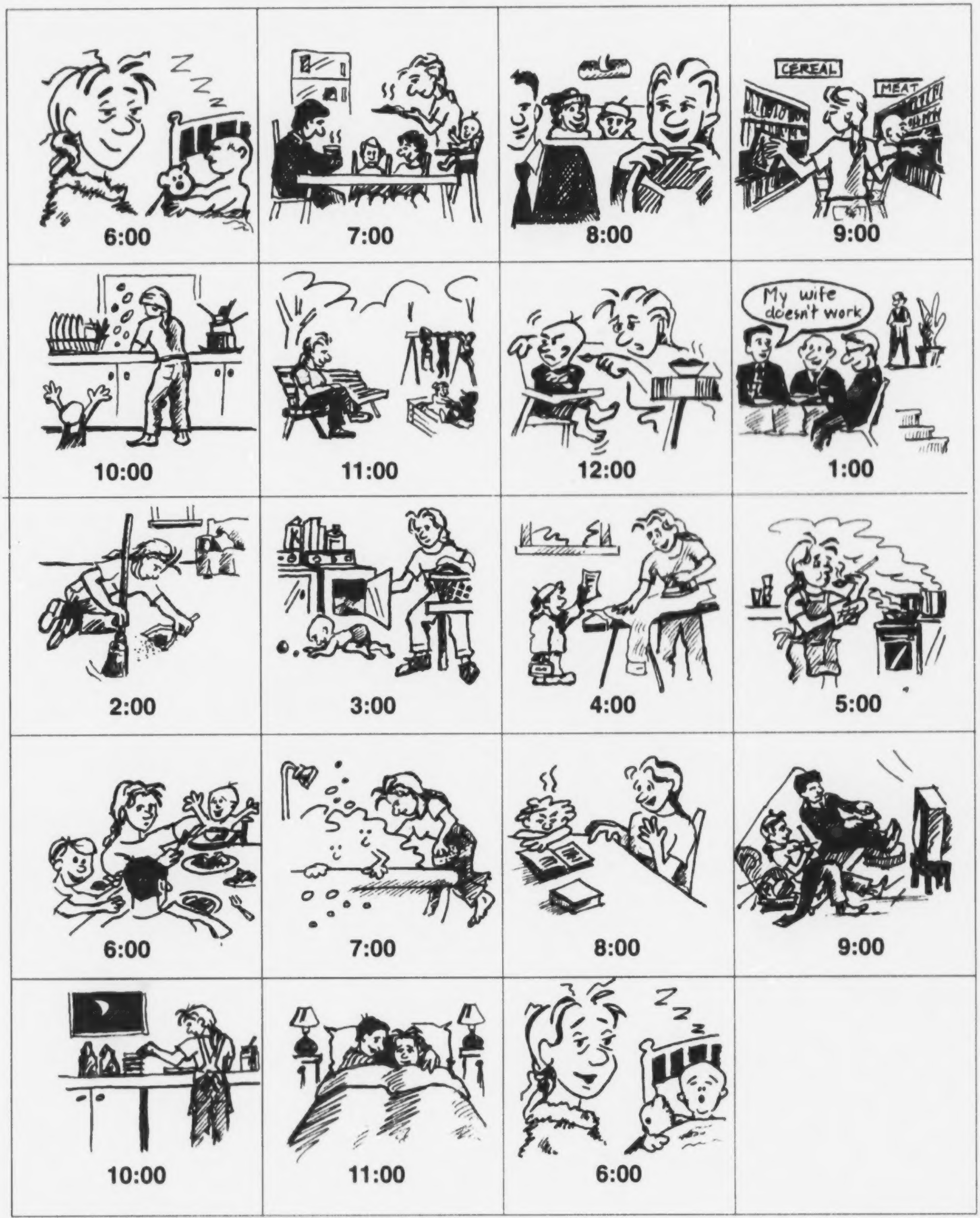

6:00
CEREAL
MEAT
7:00
8:00
9:00
My wife doesn't work
10:00
11:00
12:00
1:00
2:00
3:00
4:00
5:00
6:00
7:00
8:00
9:00
10:00
11:00
6:00

illustration: Moon Joyce

Gloria's Story

In Ecuador, I worked as a sales clerk. But life was hard there. There were not many jobs and we did not earn enough money. So we decided to try a new life in a new country.

When I first came to Toronto from Ecuador, my husband helped me look for a job. I found a job in a garment factory.

For the first three days, my husband went with me to show me the way. On the fourth day he said, "You're on your own."

And so, I had to go on the subway alone. It was very confusing for me. I was afraid.

I paid for my ticket and got my change.

I knew I had to get a transfer to go from the subway to the bus.

On my way I checked the map. I didn't understand it very well.

I wasn't sure what the signs said, so I tried to remember which way I had gone with my husband.

I was feeling so nervous I almost cried.

Everywhere I looked there were signs.

I still wasn't sure if I was going in the right direction, but I got on the train anyway.

I checked the maps again.

I was looking at the people and I was looking at the signs.

I wasn't sure what the signs said. But I watched very carefully.

When I didn't recognize the pictures any more, I knew I had missed my stop.

A woman who saw I was lost offered to help me. I told her which station I needed to get to work. She gave me directions and came with me.

I was very lucky because she spoke my language. I felt calmer. I was glad to find someone to talk to.

I was relieved to get off the subway, and come back upstairs to the street.

I knew I was late so I ran to catch the bus. But as I got off the bus my heart sank. I had gone the wrong way again.

The signs around me weren't familiar. I re-traced my steps and finally found the factory. I felt much better. At last I could begin my day's work.

From *Getting There: Producing Photostories with Immigrant Women* by Deborah Barndt, Ferne Cristal and dian marino. Between The Lines. Used by permission.

2. Exploring Learning and Identity

by *Jenny Horsman*

photo: Moon Joyce

I HAVE BEEN working in literacy in some form or other since I was an undergraduate student in the early 1970s and volunteered for my local literacy program in England. Travel to Sierra Leone gave me the opportunity to teach EAL and volunteer in adult literacy. Volunteering led to a job as the co-ordinator of a large literacy program in Sierra Leone and that experience drew me to Canada to study more about literacy and development issues. Since the early 1980s I have carried out a wide variety of projects in adult literacy and EAL in Canada. I have worked in a community literacy program, run a women's group, designed and led training courses, written curriculum, spoken at conferences, facilitated meetings and continued to study, research and write about literacy issues. For the last five years I have worked with a woman I will call Mary, whose experiences of abuse and illiteracy have influenced this chapter and much of my recent literacy writing and thinking. I have read Mary the material in this chapter and we have talked about her reactions to it and tried out sections together. Mary made many suggestions to strengthen the chapter. Earlier I did some research into women's experience of "illiteracy," which led to a doctorate in adult education and which was published by Women's Press in 1990 as Something in My Mind Besides the Everyday: Women and Literacy. *This research, and my work with Mary, led to my current focus on the impact of abuse on literacy learning and what this means for literacy programming. I hope to carry out further research to explore the links between illiteracy and experiences of violence.*

Introduction

The idea of this series of exercises is to help students look at their past to explore how the messages they received from adults and peers in the family and outside, and experiences they had as children – especially those of learning – help and hinder them in their learning now. The hope is that this process will help women to see the common ground and differences between their stories and those of other women, and the social context which has formed these experiences. The intention is that this examination will strengthen women's positive images of themselves and help them to build ways of approaching learning which are constructive for them.

These exercises may lead to women disclosing the abuse they experienced as children or as adults, but do not ask that women do so. These exercises, and the talk which happens around them, may allow trust to build. If a woman is ready to talk about her life, the space will be there for her to do so. The exercises are designed so that women can share only what they are comfortable with and will not feel pressured to disclose if it is not an appropriate time or place for them to do so. Nonetheless, if you build trust and invite disclosures, these will come. In "Responding to Disclosures of Abuse in Women's Lives" (page 15) you will find some suggestions about preparing yourself for such disclosures.

Materials needed for this chapter are assorted markers, paper, magazines to cut out and large sheets of plain paper.

A. Exploring the Messages from Home and School

1. Graffiti board

➤ Provide assorted pens and papers of different sizes and colours, and magazines to cut out words and pictures from.

➤ Ask students to make a graffiti board in response to the question, "What were you told at home and at school about yourself as a learner?"

➤ Students may work alone or in pairs as they choose. They may write the words or cut them from the magazines. Encourage them to think about the shapes and colours they want to use to show these words.

➤ Make space for a graffiti board on a notice board or a flip chart page, and invite students to put their words on it.

➤ When everyone is finished, ask students to read out the words that are there. Students could read out their own, or anyone who wants to could read out some, or you could read them, depending on reading levels and emotions.

If some students don't want to show others their words, that is fine too. They might want to add them to the board later when others will not know who put them up.

2. Guided discussion

➤ Give students a chance to talk as long as they need about their reactions to seeing all the words. Some questions to consider:

- How does it make you feel to see the words up there?
- Were you surprised by any words which were there or were not there?
- Were you surprised by how similar they were or how different they were?
- Which words would help you to feel good about yourself and make it easy to learn?
- Which words would make you feel bad about yourself and make it hard to learn?
- Who gave you messages about who you were and

whether you could learn or what you could learn? (For example, did you get messages from family members, teachers, children's aid workers?)

3. Find a positive for every negative

You might organize the groups so that people will work with others who will support them, not further put them down.

➤ Encourage students to work in pairs or groups to find a positive word for each negative word on the graffiti board they created earlier.

➤ Encourage them to think about the colours, and the styles and shapes of writing and paper, that feel positive to them.

➤ Encourage students to have fun with creating lots of good things to say to themselves about how good they are at learning.

➤ When students are finished you could go through the same procedure as for the first graffiti collection. Cover up the negative words with the positive ones as they are put up on the board.

➤ Some questions for discussion:
  - What did it feel like to do this exercise?
  - How do you feel when you see these new words up?

4. Reading and discussion

You may have many books in your class collection or local library which have powerful descriptions of school, and which capture some of the emotions of being treated badly, told you cannot learn or, in some other way, having a hard time at school. You could pick from those or use some of the extracts included at the end of this chapter (pages 75 – 98). You need to choose two or three extracts that students in your group or class will relate to. If there are First Nations students you might want to include something set in a residential school; students who have been labelled with mental disabilities, or who have physical disabilities, might relate to something about labelling or something set in an institution. You should gauge what type of pieces your group would want to work with. If you have worked with a group for a long time and built trust, you might feel ready to read an emotional piece. If you don't know the group well or you fear the ways they might put each other down, you might choose a less explicitly violent piece. You might choose to read any number of these pieces. You could choose many different ways to read them, depending on the reading levels of the group and whether they prefer to read silently to themselves, to read out loud, or to listen to you or a taped reading. If you choose to use several different readings you could divide the class into groups based on interest in different themes, or different reading styles chosen, or different levels of reading material. Each small group could read a different piece in a way that works for them. This could include listening to a tape several times if necessary.

➤ The small groups could discuss any or all of the pieces. Some questions to consider:

- What is the piece about?
- Why do you think the author wrote about it?
- What do you think it would feel like to be that child?
- What do you think that child would be like as an adult learner?
- What does it feel like to read this description now?
- What does it make you remember about your own schooling?

➤ After the discussions, groups could report to each other.

➤ Then, if students are interested, groups could switch readings and report again, adding to the earlier groups' reports.

5. Writing

➤ Students could write on any of these themes:

- the first day of school, or the last day;
- the worst and the best of school;
- a particularly wonderful occasion or terrible occasion at school;
- special days;
- recess, or . . . .

➤ See if students want to share their writing, by reading it aloud themselves or asking someone else to read it, or by putting it on a notice board for others to read later.

B. Messages from Home and Childhood

1. Reading and discussion

➤ Readings included at the end of the chapter (pages 75 – 89) or others selected to prompt talk about childhood could be used with the same sort of reading and discussion process followed for the readings about school.

2. Writing

These readings could also be followed by a writing exercise if there is interest. Similarly, the themes could be:

- the best or worst . . .
- a wonderful occasion or a terrible occasion;
- a fictional story;
- some advice you would give yourself as a child knowing what you know as an adult.

3. Change the picture

➤ Brainstorm words and phrases that describe how school and home **should** be. Then ask everyone to write about their idea of the ideal home or ideal school.
➤ After everyone has finished writing, discuss how society would need to change so that more homes and more schools fit the ideal.

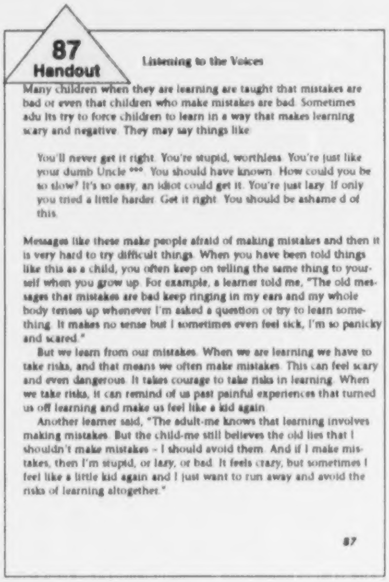
C. Listening to the Old Messages

1. Reading: "Listening to the Voices"

➤ Introduce the idea that during childhood we learn many messages that we continue to tell ourselves. If those messages are negative, they can get in the way of learning.

➤ Read "Listening to the Voices" (pages 87 – 88).

➤ Get the group to talk about whether they hear old discouraging messages when they try to learn. Do they hear or tell themselves that they are stupid, or lazy, or . . . ?



87
Handout

Listening to the Voices

Many children when they are learning are taught that mistakes are bad or even that children who make mistakes are bad. Sometimes adults try to force children to learn in a way that makes learning scary and negative. They may say things like:

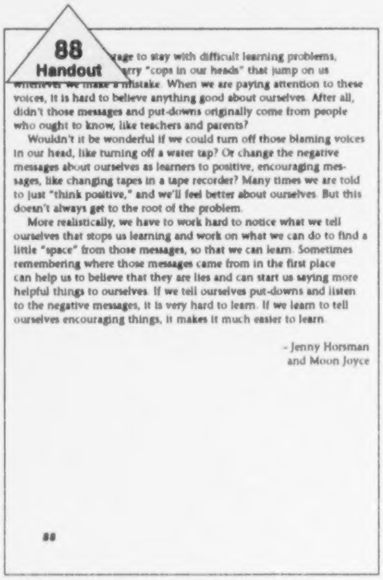
> You'll never get it right. You're stupid, worthless. You're just like your dumb Uncle ***. You should have known. How could you be so slow? It's so easy, an idiot could get it. You're just lazy. If only you tried a little harder. Get it right. You should be ashamed of this.

Messages like these make people afraid of making mistakes and then it is very hard to try difficult things. When you have been told things like this as a child, you often keep on telling the same thing to yourself when you grow up. For example, a learner told me, "The old messages that mistakes are bad keep ringing in my ears and my whole body tenses up whenever I'm asked a question or try to learn something. It makes no sense but I sometimes even feel sick, I'm so panicky and scared."

But we learn from our mistakes. When we are learning we have to take risks, and that means we often make mistakes. This can feel scary and even dangerous. It takes courage to take risks in learning. When we take risks, it can remind of us past painful experiences that turned us off learning and make us feel like a kid again.

Another learner said, "The adult-me knows that learning involves making mistakes. But the child-me still believes the old lies that I shouldn't make mistakes – I should avoid them. And if I make mistakes, then I'm stupid, or lazy, or bad. It feels crazy, but sometimes I feel like a little kid again and I just want to run away and avoid the risks of learning altogether."

87



88
Handout

age to stay with difficult learning problems, rry "cops in our heads" that jump on us whenever we make a mistake. When we are paying attention to these voices, it is hard to believe anything good about ourselves. After all, didn't those messages and put-downs originally come from people who ought to know, like teachers and parents?

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could turn off those blaming voices in our head, like turning off a water tap? Or change the negative messages about ourselves as learners to positive, encouraging messages, like changing tapes in a tape recorder? Many times we are told to just "think positive," and we'll feel better about ourselves. But this doesn't always get to the root of the problem.

More realistically, we have to work hard to notice what we tell ourselves that stops us learning and work on what we can do to find a little "space" from those messages, so that we can learn. Sometimes remembering where those messages came from in the first place can help us to believe that they are lies and can start us saying more helpful things to ourselves. If we tell ourselves put-downs and listen to the negative messages, it is very hard to learn. If we learn to tell ourselves encouraging things, it makes it much easier to learn.

– Jenny Horsman
and Moon Joyce

88

2. Writing

➤ Ask student to write the discouraging messages they hear in their heads, then think about a way they could say something more encouraging to themselves. Write that down too. Working in pairs might help them think of something good to say to themselves if they are stuck.

➤ Talk about what it felt like to do this exercise and whether they can believe the good things they wrote down. They might want to pin up the encouraging messages they told themselves for when they next feel they cannot learn something.

➤ It is not easy to turn the put-downs around and believe the positive. So talk about what else students can do to give themselves a rest from the negative voices.

➤ End with a round of things students are going to try next time to help them feel good about their ability to learn.

For example, when students can only hear the negative, it might help them if they remember what someone else who always encourages them would say to them, or they could think what they would say to someone else if they were having the same trouble, or they might take a break and do something else until they feel ready to give it another try. Encourage students to think of something they can try to turn things around next time they feel they cannot learn.

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D. Looking at Learning

1. Exploring the highs and lows*

You could do this exercise as a whole group first, writing down all the words students call out on the board or flip chart paper Then encourage students to write what applies to them from the words already written on the board. Alternatively you could start by putting lots of possible words on the board and explaining their meaning. Then students could do the exercise alone, taking any words they want to from the board.

➤ Introduce this exercise, which has been adapted from a book about creativity. Its purpose is to help you look at the situations which cause your mood to go up or down, and explore how you feel about yourself in these situations.

➤ However you choose to organize it you will need to call out instructions step by step. They are:

- Divide the paper or board into two halves.
- On one side write all the words which come to mind when you remember being in **low spirits**. For example, "flat," "bad-tempered," "grumpy," "low," or "grey." Call out, or write, any words that come to mind.
- On the other side write all the words which come to mind when you remember being in a **good mood**. For example, when you are feeling great do you feel "high," "flying," "sailing," or "glowing"? Call out, or write, any words that come to mind for you.
- On the low side write some things you actually **do, think and feel** when you are in a low mood. For example, do you yell at the dog, eat junk food, think "I'm so stupid," feel like quitting . . . ? Call out, or write, any words that come to mind.
- On the high side write some things you actually **do, think and feel** when you are in a **high mood**. For example, do you feel full of energy, feel like celebrating, laugh a lot, buy gifts . . . ?
- On the low side think about the **situations, experiences, people and events** that seem to be part of your low mood. What are the times you feel particularly bad, what makes this situation or this person or this experience get to you? For example, you have to deal with a welfare worker and her tone of voice makes you feel in the wrong and . . .

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*Adapted from *TV Ontario Forum on Creativity* by Christa Van Daele

- On the high side think about the **situations, experiences, people and events** that seem to be part of your high mood. What are the times you feel particularly good? What makes this situation help you feel good? For example, you realize you can learn something you thought you would never understand, or a friend supports you . . . .

If this exercise was done as a whole group, you may want to follow up with students doing it for themselves or you may just want one collective version.

2. Guided discussion

➤ What did you learn about yourself as you thought about how to answer each question? Some questions to consider:

- Were you surprised by any words which came to mind?
- Did you notice any patterns or types of situations which make you feel good or bad?

➤ Ask students to think of a title for the positive side of themselves and for the low side.

3. Writing

➤ Ask students to write about an experience of learning when they felt all the positive things. They could use their titles for the positive side. They should give as much detail as they can and use as many of the words on the board as they want. They should share their writing if they choose.

➤ Encourage students to keep that piece of writing and re-read it, or remember everything about feeling positive, so that they can reconnect with those good feelings when they are feeling lousy, and remind themselves how good they can feel.

4. Write or draw about experiences of learning

➤ Introduce the idea that we all bring to the learning situation all sorts of patterns of feelings and reactions to our feelings. Some of those may help us cope with the tough situation of learning; others may get in the way. Ask students to draw themselves and write on the drawing how their body is involved when they are working well and how their body is involved when they are having difficulty learning.

➤ Working in pairs and using several sheets of flip chart paper stuck together or a roll of brown paper, they could draw around each other to create an outline of each person. 💔

➤ Ask each student to write or draw on their outline, using words or pictures which show something about themselves learning.

➤ As well as drawing, or if students do not want to draw, they could write a journal. These questions and suggestions might prompt students to think about what they do when learning is not working well. Suggest that they pick up on any of these questions which makes them think, or connects to their experiences, and ignore any they are not interested in:

- How do you work with feelings of anger or frustration?
- Do you get angry or frustrated when you are trying to learn something and you don't understand it or can't do it?
- Write about a time when you were angry when you were trying to learn something, or trying to deal with the place where you are studying. Write about what you do when you are angry.
- What do you do when "it" is not working? when you feel you just can't do it, you can't learn?
- What do you tell yourself? Do you leave? For example, walk out of the classroom, quit the program, just leave in your mind, or . . . .

💔 Be careful not to let anyone be drawn who is not comfortable with this.

Students might not want to share what they have drawn or written with anyone. Or they might want you to read it or look at it, or to read or have it read out loud to a small group, or the whole group, depending on how well they know you, what they are used to doing in your class, the size of the group, and the level of trust in the group. After a first session of drawing or journal writing, the group might be able to generate other questions and ideas to be written about or drawn; if any of the writings are made public to you or members of the class, they might generate other topics about how people cope with their feelings as they try to learn. This could then become the subject of one or more further pieces of writing or even an ongoing journal. A regular response journal on the subject of learning and coping with the feelings which emerge might be a rich vehicle for exploring what gets in the way of learning. At some point in the writing or drawing process you could explore individually with students or with the group what they want to change about how they deal with the feelings which come up as they learn.

➤ Write about what you do when you "can't do it."
- Are you terrified of "not doing it right"?
- Do you hate to take a risk?
- Do you worry about what will happen if you "do it wrong"?
- Write about your fears when you are trying to learn.

5. Write about what "works"

➤ Invite students to ask for what they need by writing as many sentences as they can with each of these beginnings:
- I can learn when I . . . .
- I block my own learning when I . . . .
- You help me learn when you . . . .
- You make it harder for me to learn when you . . . .

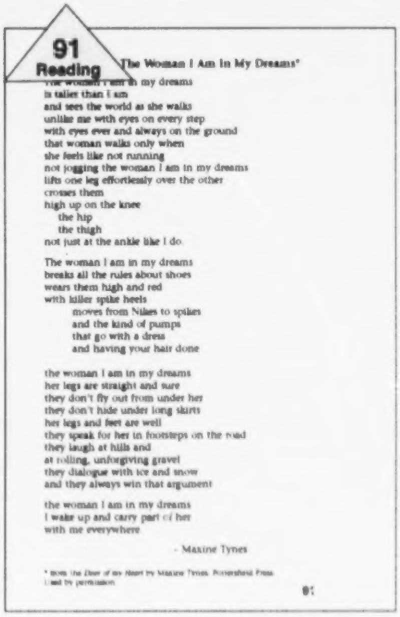
➤ Display the responses (if students are comfortable with that) to see what everyone needs to do to help themselves learn, and what people need from others.
➤ Students could change their statements at a later time if they have new insights into what helps and hinders their learning.
➤ You, the facilitator, teacher, or tutor could also write these sentences with the rest of the class, focusing either on what helps and hinders your teaching, or on what helps and hinders your own learning.

This could begin the process of sharing responsibility for each other's learning. You and the class could look for patterns and talk about how to help each other as much as possible and how to help each other not to block our own learning. When anyone in the group sees another doing exactly what they say gets in the way of their own learning, how will they supportively help them notice and try to change?

E. Dreams of Who You Want to Be

1. Reading: "The Woman I Am in My Dreams" by Maxine Tynes

➤ Begin by reading Maxine Tynes' poem (page 91).
➤ Talk about what she is like and what she dreams of being like.



91
Reading

The Woman I Am In My Dreams*

The woman I am in my dreams
is taller than I am
and sees the world as she walks
unlike me with eyes on every step
with eyes ever and always on the ground
that woman walks only when
she feels like not running
not jogging the woman I am in my dreams
lifts one leg effortlessly over the other
crosses them
high up on the knee
  the hip
  the thigh
not just at the ankle like I do.

The woman I am in my dreams
breaks all the rules about shoes
wears them high and red
with killer spike heels
    moves from Nikes to spikes
    and the kind of pumps
    that go with a dress
    and having your hair done

the woman I am in my dreams
her legs are straight and sure
they don't fly out from under her
they don't hide under long skirts
her legs and feet are well
they speak for her in footsteps on the road
they laugh at hills and
at rolling, unforgiving gravel
they dialogue with ice and snow
and they always win that argument

the woman I am in my dreams
I wake up and carry part of her
with me everywhere

- Maxine Tynes

* from the *Door of my Heart* by Maxine Tynes. Pottersfield Press.
Used by permission.

91

➤ List words for the feelings the class thinks that Maxine expresses, and/or words for the feelings which come to students' minds as they hear the poem.

2. Writing

➤ Invite students to write their own story, poem or description of who they are in their dreams.

➤ Students who want to could read their pieces out loud, or have them read.

3. Guided discussion

➤ What can help the dream person inside of us to be more present in our everyday life?

Resources

(See the Bibliography for complete listings.)

Allen, Guy et al. *No More Masterpieces: Short Prose by New Writers*

Allen, Guy, ed. *The Story I Never Told: Thirty-Minute Stories*

Capponi, Pat. *Upstairs in the Crazy House: The Life of a Psychiatric Survivor*

Doiron, Rose. *My Name is Rose*

Green, Ann K. *Coming Out of My Shell.*

Horsman, Jenny. *Something in My Mind Besides the Everyday: Women and Literacy*

Meadus, Rosemary. "When They Label You" in *Women: Where Have We Been? Where Are We Going?* by Women's Group of Action Read

Tynes, Maxine N. *The Door of My Heart*

Van Daele, Christa. *TV Ontario Forum on Creativity*

Readings about School

I went to school.
There were too many children.
We all needed help.
We did not learn to read and write.

Sometimes we just sat there
doing nothing.

– Rose Doiron

From *My Name is Rose* by Rose Doiron. East End Literacy Press. Used by permission.

School and Hell

When I went to school, I did not like it. They put me in a slow learners' class when I was seven. I did not get anywhere in that class.

No one cared about me, so I did not learn anything. I got into trouble all the time, and they strapped me so I did not care what happened.

All they showed me was how to make Rosary beads. I learned that well. I did not get to read or write.

They put me in the hall, and the other teachers said, "There she is in the hall again." I told them I was having a break.

I felt like no one cared about me. So I did not get a chance to be what I wanted to be.

They can go to hell.

– Catherine

From *The Story I Never Told* edited by Guy Allen. Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy. Used by permission.

John, Not Me

I had a brother named John. John was two years older than I was. We were in the same class at school together. John and I were always in trouble at school. John had epilepsy and I did not learn.

John was not supposed to ride bicycles. One day we rode a bicycle together – over another kid. John had a seizure, and I got the strap.

John and I were always together. I loved him. He was my big brother. I took care of him and he of me.

One day in Grade Two, John fell asleep in class. The teacher hit him on the head with a book. I got really mad. I struck the teacher and screamed at her: "John was having a seizure, not sleeping!" John died that day. So did I.

You see John could not go back to school. He was placed in an institution, Huronia, where he died nine years later. The year he died I was sixteen, and I was placed in a mental institution.

John died, but not me.

– Donna Lovell

From *The Story I Never Told* edited by Guy Allen. Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy. Used by permission.

In School

When I did go to school I used to be in a lot of trouble with the teachers and nuns. I don't like fighting at all but when I'd see three on one, I would get into it. I never started a fight in my life but I'd always be there for the other children. We had a lot of bullies in our school. I used to take five to ten children to school and take them back home so the bullies wouldn't beat them up.

One time in school these bullies were beating a little girl. I took her away and stared beating them up. When I went back to school I got it with a belt from the nun because I beat up one of the "teacher's pets." That didn't bother me then. What got to me was that they didn't care what the bullies were doing to the child. That day after school I beat up the girl again for not telling the truth about what happened. The nun asked me why I was fighting with this one girl. I told her she was beating up the little ones and I didn't like that. She told me to tell her if the girl did that again, and if I could stop fighting until the end of the year she would give me a prize. So I did, and at the end of the year I got a medal and a picture of Our Lady.

– Ann K. Green

From *Coming Out of My Shell* by Ann K. Green. Educational Planning and Design.
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When They Label You

When I was in Centennial I was in a special class. They had me doing things I knew how to do and they still wouldn't let me do anything harder. They gave me a card that said that I was mentally handicapped. I asked them why they gave me that because it makes me so angry. They said they gave it to me because I was a slow learner. They shouldn't classify people because you start to believe that they are right. I also think that the teacher should spend more time with the individual. They always made us raise our hands if we wanted help. Some kids were too shy. So they wouldn't really learn anything.

When I was in grades 5 and 6 they would tell you to sit down and read. I had no idea how to read. I would sit and look at the pictures. I didn't learn to read until I was in grade 8. Funny thing about that is I passed with good grades from grade 5 and up even though I didn't know how to do it. That tells you how good the school system is. I didn't know how to do it and they passed me. They should get people who care about the children so that they will actually teach the children. So the kids today are our next generation. They have to learn. It's part of life. The kids will then be able to get good jobs to support themselves.

When you label people it stops them from getting the jobs they want. It's already sunk into me. I am afraid to try new things because of my label. They have put a big wall between me and the things I have to learn. They had me in Special Ed. When I was five they had already labeled me and they wouldn't let me go because I was too young. They told me that I was retarded from the age of five. When you are a child, you believe adults. Ever since then I have been shy and scared. That was mental abuse. If my child ever goes to school and they say that about my child I will be very upset.

Now you can see what kind of mental destruction they have done to me.

– Rosemary Meadus

From *Women: Where Have We Been? Where Are We Going?* by Women's Group of Action Read. Garlic Press. Used by permission.

Lakeview Indian Day School

Real fast, I turn around in my desk to look at my cousin. He says something in our Odawa and Ojibwe language. This is a mistake.

The teacher, Miss McNulty, walks with a limp. She uses a cane. We all jump when she hits a desk with it. I'm sure the cane would cry if it had feelings. She doesn't need her cane this time. She stands in front of me waving a new yardstick.

Another yardstick. How many did she break so far, on someone or on the blackboard? Crack! Across my knuckles. It happens fast. I half cry out. I try to hold it in. A big lump rises from inside, pauses at my throat, stops briefly at my nose. My eyes hurt. Tears roll down my face. My nose drips.

"Mary Louise, you must never speak that whatever language again! Never! Never! It is not a proper language. You must forget it totally! Speak English only. Hear me?" She shakes me by the shoulders.

"Yes ma'am."

She glares at me. "Repeat after me. I will not speak Indian ever again."

I chokingly speak every word after her because I am scared she will hit me with her yardstick. But my habit is to speak *Anishinabe* and English together. I don't understand why speaking *Anishinabe* is wrong. Miss McNulty makes my mother language sound evil and ugly.

Catechism begins another day at this Indian Day School. Miss McNulty asks, "Who made you, Jane?"

Jane looks around and says, "God made me."

"Dick, where is God?"

Dick answers fast. "God is everywhere." I look at Dick in wonder. He is smart.

"Mary Louise, say The Hail Mary in front of the class."

I get up in front of the classroom trying to keep my eyes straight ahead. I'm ready to die. Miss McNulty will kill me if I forget a word or a line of this English prayer. She tells me to fold my hands.

Hail Mary, full of Grace
the Lord is with Thee.
Blessed art thou amongst women,
Blessed is the fruit of . . .

I wish I could say this prayer in *Anishinabe. N'mishomiss*, my grandfather and the chief of the West Bay Reservation for many years, taught me to pray in *Anishinabe. N'mishomiss* is a devoted Roman Catholic.

This morning, I feel scared as I try to remember. I've said this prayer at The Legion of Mary, the religious group on the reservation. There, we pray together. I am not forced to say every word or sentence. I feel safe and happy there. This morning, my mind empties and I forget. Nobody is allowed to help me. I have to say this prayer by myself. For sure, this is doomsday.

"Mary Louise, stay after school and write The Hail Mary on all the blackboards and then stand in the cloak room and repeat it until I return."

I write until my arm feels like falling off. At last, the blackboards are full with Hail Marys. I say them aloud over and over again in the cloak room. I am alone. I feel weird and sick. Miss McNulty does not come back. Maybe she forgets I am still here. I need her permission to go home. I have chores to do. I have to bring in firewood and feed the pigs.

I knock on Miss McNulty's kitchen door. I almost picture her eyeballs rolling. I am not used to her loud, screechy voice. She sounds like the pigs we kill on our farm. The door finally opens and out comes Miss McNulty almost pushing me down. Straight for the class room goes bent-over Miss McNulty, like "the crooked man who walked a crooked mile." Her legs or whatever must be bothering her again. She checks the blackboard carefully. She orders me to sweep the steps.

"Make sure you sweep the corners properly. Then you may go."

I run all the way home without stopping. I'm going to tell someone what happened at school today. I know my mother does not like to hear something like this. One of her rules is "Children should be seen and not heard." She nearly always listens to other people's sayings. Like Miss McNulty, she hits me, except she uses long branches off trees. I try to stay away from her, not tell her anything, even when I know it's the truth.

N'mishomiss is different. His rule is to always tell the truth.

"Mishomiss! Mishomiss! Where are you?"

I run to the barn and find him in his workshop. He is fixing Queen's harness. Queen is one of his ponies. *Mishomiss* looks at me with a question in his eyes. He sits himself down, takes his pipe out, fills it with tobacco. He points to the glass bottle filled with sweet tea. I fill two cups with tea. He reaches out his hand to take one cup; I keep the other and sit in front of him in one of his handmade chairs made out of tree stumps. *N'mishomiss* looks at me, stays quiet while I tell him my day at school. When I finish talking, he quietly puffs his pipe. He is in deep thought. I wait for him to finish thinking. He takes his pipe out of his mouth.

"Are you telling me the truth, Brother (his nickname for me)?"

"*Aehn* (yes) *Mishomiss.*" This time he does not laugh or smile as he does when he catches me telling him big or funny stories.

Soon, a younger, kinder teacher takes Miss McNulty's place at Lakeview Indian Day School.

– Mary Lou C. DeBassige

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The Report Card

These were the last days of spring. It was 1975, and I was sixteen. In homeroom we received our third semester report cards. I was nervous. I thought I had done well, but I had been wrong before.

Mr. Cook called our names in alphabetical order. I was first. I was always first. I walked up the aisle past Mike, Lyn and Pat, my friends. They and the rest of the class watched me. Mr. Cook handed me the envelope and smiled. I took it back to my desk and just held it. I decided to wait until after class to look. If the news was bad, nobody would see my reaction.

After class, I walked to my locker. There I met Karen, my best friend. She was upset and scared. Her marks were not good. Her father would be angry tonight.

I thought going for a walk and talking might help her, so we walked across Morningstar Drive to the park opposite the school. A small creek runs the length of the park. We walked beside it and talked – that is, Karen talked, and I listened. There was nothing I could say to help her. My father did not yell at me all the time, and her never hit me. I wanted to find words to make Karen feel better. I loved Karen, and I felt helpless.

We sat down by the creek. I leaned back on the grass, closed my eyes, and tried to think of something to say. We had only a forty-minute spare so after a while I sat up to say we should start back.

My eyes met Karen's, then traced a line from her eyes to her right hand. She held a broken coke bottle. She dragged the jagged edge methodically along her left wrist. She didn't look as if this caused her any pain. I wanted to scream, grab the glass away from her, but I sat paralyzed and no sound came out of my mouth.

Then after what seemed like minutes but was, I am sure, only seconds, I asked Karen to stop. She did not. She did not seem to hear my voice. I ran.

I ran across Morningstar Drive and into the school. I needed to find Mrs. Shepherd. We trusted her. She was our friend.

Mrs. Shepherd looked up as I walked in. She ate a sandwich. In a calm, unhurried voice that I did not recognize I said, "Karen is in trouble."

Mrs. Shepherd ran with me across Morningstar Drive and into the park. We sat down beside Karen. Mrs. Shepherd did not take the glass away from Karen. I was surprised.

Mrs. Shepherd said in a soft voice, "Give me the glass." Tears ran down Karen's face. She continued to cut long vertical lines down the centre of her left wrist. Blood ran straight down her arm, then changed course to drip off the side of her hand into the creek. Blood hit the water, dispersed, and was gone.

Karen stopped. She gave the glass to Mrs. Shepherd. The three of us walked back across Morningstar Drive and into the school. The bell rang. People poured out of classes in a rush. They all talked at the same time. We threaded through them to the nurse's office.

Mrs. Shepherd closed the door and led Karen to the bed, one of those white metal hospital beds. Karen looked small and pale against all that white. Mrs. Shepherd filled a bowl with water, and she poured in antiseptic. She cleaned Karen's wrist and talked in a soft, calm voice.

I watched. They seemed to talk from far away. I couldn't hear what Mrs. Shepherd said.

I had to get away. I needed to think. There was a tiny room just off the one we were in, a little office with a desk. I crawled under that desk. I curled as tightly as I could into the far corner underneath that desk. I felt cold. I pulled my jacket tightly around me. There was something in the pocket. I took it out. It was my report card. I looked at the envelope, still unopened, and quietly, so that Mrs. Shepherd and Karen could not hear me, I cried.

– Carol Allen

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My First Day at St. Patrick's Anglican

I looked forward to starting primary school in Grenada. I had visited St. Patrick's Anglican School on numerous occasions. It was the location of our annual church harvest. My sister was an upper class pupil and cousin Maggie was my teacher. All my classmates from Mrs. Redhead's Preparatory School were in my class. I had a reputation for talking. I stopped only for breath. That day, by ten o'clock, I had spoken to Sally, Ann, Peter and Christopher and had been told to stop six times. I stopped talking to go to the bathroom. I went toward the door. "Paula! Where are you going?" screamed teacher Maggie. "To the outhouse," I replied. "Did you ask for permission?" she asked sternly. I shook my head. "Sit back down, then ask." Teacher went to help Margaret, the girl across the room. I was agitated. My bladder felt about to burst. "Teacher Maggie, can I go outside and pee?" I yelled. I prayed to God to let me live. "That is the rudest thing I have ever heard. You will not go to the bathroom until breaktime." She turned and walked away. Beneath my breath I cursed (no one would believe I attended church every Sunday). Crossing my legs didn't help. I couldn't take it anymore. I looked down. A big puddle formed beneath my chair. "Teacher Maggie, Paula peed in her panty," screamed Jerry. My classmates thought it funny. When I laughed, it was with relief. Teacher Maggie was not pleased. She made me mop it up. After my task, I stretched out my hand to Teacher Maggie to receive my punishment. She hit me with a ruler. It didn't hurt, but I cried to please her. I learned that trick from going to Sunday matinee. At lunch time, Cousin Maggie and I walked to her mother's house for lunch. This we did for three years.

– Paula Peters

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Messages from Home and Childhood

The Wind

I was ten. So it must have been 1971 that the only hurricane to hit Cobequid Bay, Nova Scotia, during my life there, was coming.

It was September. My brother David and I were bored.

"Come on Marie. What kind of sister are you? Just try it!"

She agreed.

We placed her into an old steamer trunk and locked it. David and I hauled it into the yard.

We went into the house and looked out at the trunk. The wind came up. The trunk hit a tree, spun around, hit the tree again and smashed into the house.

David laughed. The wind died.

We raced for the trunk, now beaten and torn. We unlocked it. Marie was crying. Her tooth had gone through her lip. We pulled her out. We helped her into the house. The wind blew hard. We watched from inside as the trunk blew into the woods.

Marie looked at the spinning trunk, looked at the blood on her dress, looked at us, ran and yelled for our mother.

David and I looked at each other.

– Gordon Scott

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Upstairs in the Crazy House

I believed what my father had always told me: I was stupid and lazy. I'd heard it so often I couldn't choose to disbelieve it. It seemed I'd always been slow and stubborn. I still couldn't tell time in the fourth grade, couldn't add or subtract, despite my father's nightly tutorials. I couldn't understand why I persisted in my laziness when it always brought me so much grief. I have very few memories of the time I spent in early grade school, and those I have are riddled with beatings and shame.

I remember the small apartment in downtown Montreal, the one with the alley in the back where all the other kids played through long summer evenings. I remember the dining-room table where he'd make me sit beside him, grade four math book open in front of me. I remember how quiet the house was with everyone else in bed.

He'd make me leave one hand flat, palm down on the table.

"Ten times ten."

I'd scratch the page nervously with my pencil, unable to remember the right response.

"I said ten times ten."

My head would go blank. His heavy fist would come crashing down on my hand till it seemed I had no bones left unbroken. Every wrong answer brought pain, causing me to panic so much that the few correct answers I could remember scooted right out of my brain, abandoning me to his cruelty.

– Pat Capponi

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Why I Left School

One day I came home from school for dinner. I found my baby brother alone and crying for something to eat. At the time the only thing in the house to eat was bread and tea. I didn't know where my mother was. That day I made up my mind to quit school, stay home and do the best I could for the rest of my bothers and sisters.

I loved going to school just to get away from the drinking and the fighting. But I could not learn because of what was going on at home. I was too worried about my brother as there was hardly any food to eat, or wood to keep us warm. My step-father worked but he drank all the money.

I took on the responsibility of going to the Salvation Army and the Presentation Convent for food and clothes. I also got Christmas toys from the Salvation Army. One day a Salvation Army Officer came to the house and tried to talk to my mother and step-father about the conditions under which we were living. Getting no satisfaction from them, they were reported to Social Services.

The social workers didn't help. They wanted to split up our whole family. They told my mother and step-father that if the house didn't get fixed and we didn't get proper food and clothing, we would have to go to a foster home. This caused a big racket at home. I got blamed for it because I had been the one who was always going places to look for food and clothes.

– Ann K. Green

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Listening to the Voices

Many children when they are learning are taught that mistakes are bad or even that children who make mistakes are bad. Sometimes adults try to force children to learn in a way that makes learning scary and negative. They may say things like:

> You'll never get it right. You're stupid, worthless. You're just like your dumb Uncle ***. You should have known. How could you be so slow? It's so easy, an idiot could get it. You're just lazy. If only you tried a little harder. Get it right. You should be ashamed of this.

Messages like these make people afraid of making mistakes and then it is very hard to try difficult things. When you have been told things like this as a child, you often keep on telling the same thing to yourself when you grow up. For example, a learner told me, "The old messages that mistakes are bad keep ringing in my ears and my whole body tenses up whenever I'm asked a question or try to learn something. It makes no sense but I sometimes even feel sick, I'm so panicky and scared."

But we learn from our mistakes. When we are learning we have to take risks, and that means we often make mistakes. This can feel scary and even dangerous. It takes courage to take risks in learning. When we take risks, it can remind of us past painful experiences that turned us off learning and make us feel like a kid again.

Another learner said, "The adult-me knows that learning involves making mistakes. But the child-me still believes the old lies that I shouldn't make mistakes – I should avoid them. And if I make mistakes, then I'm stupid, or lazy, or bad. It feels crazy, but sometimes I feel like a little kid again and I just want to run away and avoid the risks of learning altogether."

It takes great courage to stay with difficult learning problems, especially when we carry "cops in our heads" that jump on us whenever we make a mistake. When we are paying attention to these voices, it is hard to believe anything good about ourselves. After all, didn't those messages and put-downs originally come from people who ought to know, like teachers and parents?

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could turn off those blaming voices in our head, like turning off a water tap? Or change the negative messages about ourselves as learners to positive, encouraging messages, like changing tapes in a tape recorder? Many times we are told to just "think positive," and we'll feel better about ourselves. But this doesn't always get to the root of the problem.

More realistically, we have to work hard to notice what we tell ourselves that stops us learning and work on what we can do to find a little "space" from those messages, so that we can learn. Sometimes remembering where those messages came from in the first place can help us to believe that they are lies and can start us saying more helpful things to ourselves. If we tell ourselves put-downs and listen to the negative messages, it is very hard to learn. If we learn to tell ourselves encouraging things, it makes it much easier to learn.

– Jenny Horsman
and Moon Joyce

The Woman I Am in My Dreams

The woman I am in my dreams
is taller than I am
and sees the world as she walks
unlike me with eyes on every step
with eyes ever and always on the ground
that woman walks only when
she feels like not running
not jogging the woman I am in my dreams
lifts one leg effortlessly over the other
crosses them
high up on the knee
    the hip
    the thigh
not just at the ankle like I do.

The woman I am in my dreams
breaks all the rules about shoes
wears them high and red
with killer spike heels
        moves from Nikes to spikes
        and the kind of pumps
        that go with a dress
        and having your hair done

the woman I am in my dreams
her legs are straight and sure
they don't fly out from under her
they don't hide under long skirts
her legs and feet are well
they speak for her in footsteps on the road
they laugh at hills and
at rolling, unforgiving gravel
they dialogue with ice and snow
and they always win that argument

the woman I am in my dreams
I wake up and carry part of her
with me everywhere.

– Maxine Tynes

From *The Door of My Heart* by Maxine Tynes. Pottersfield Press. Used by permission.

3. Self-Esteem and Literacy

by Dorothee Komangapik

photo: Steve Sunstrum

Dorothee Komangapik was born in Germany at the end of the Second World War and was raised in southern Ontario. Her lifelong hearing impairment, unidentified by her teachers during her early education, made her aware of the difficulties and frustrations of an undiagnosed learning problem. She failed to complete high school but had surprising success in university as a mature student. A negative marital experience in the early 1970s, as well as her childhood sexual abuse, acquainted her with serious feminist concerns and taught her valuable survival skills. She calls her 12-year residence in Pond Inlet, as a member of the Inuit community, her "apprenticeship" in Inuit life with her husband and family-in-law.

She is passionately involved in northern aboriginal literacy issues, helping initiate the N.W.T. Literacy Association and promoting first language literacy as a necessity for English literacy. She currently works as an instructor at Nunavut Arctic College where she specializes in innovative multi-level adult literacy classroom instruction.

In 1993 she gained her master's degree in adult education, and in 1994 became a grandmother.

Introduction

Many Inuit women on Baffin Island have reported that they seek literacy learning in order to improve their own lives and the lives of their children. They may be school drop-outs, compelled to leave school at an early age due to some family circumstance, an untimely pregnancy or their lack of progress in learning. Often it was a combination of factors that made them leave school. Their families may not value education. They may even now be undertaking literacy learning, they have said, because they believe they must. Many Inuit women have said that if they become literate in English, they will be able to get a non-menial job. Literacy learning may give hope for bettering themselves and their lives.

Women literacy learners from every culture suffer many stresses as they attempt to learn. They may be anxious about leaving their small children or babies with baby sitters or in day care. They may suffer poverty for any number of reasons. They may be malnourished. They may have hearing, sight or other learning problems. They may have emotional or health problems. They may not know how to get along with people outside of their families and may be unsure of themselves outside of their homes. They may be survivors of assault and abuse. They may still be suffering assault and abuse. They may have turned to unhealthy coping styles in order to face their daily lives. The reasons why many women literacy learners begin their learning with a very low sense of self-esteem are countless.

Unrealistic expectations of literacy learning can undermine learning. In literacy training, many women learners expect to learn the tools of reading and writing and that is all. Many of them are not aware that how they think about themselves can help or hinder their literacy learning. I like to offer an opportunity for women literacy learners to learn and develop repair skills for their sense of self-esteem as part of their literacy learning in order to facilitate their learning. A special effort made by the instructor or tutor right from the moment of contact with the learners will enhance their progress. Combination exercises which build self-esteem at the same time as they build literacy skills have proven to be effective in developing the already-existing sense of self-esteem which brought them into the literacy learning group.

Following is a selection of self-esteem literacy exercises that I have used to help Inuit women literacy learners value themselves in order to take the risks that need to be taken to learn well. These exercises may be useful for women literacy learners from any background.

So that the learners know beforehand what is expected of them and what it is all about, it is good to introduce each exercise. In this way literacy learners are less prone to feel manipulated. Instead they may feel safer knowing what is about to happen.

The exercises can be adapted for one-on-one literacy work, except for Section D, "Same and Different." Please feel free to adapt, excerpt and modify the exercises to suit your learners. Take what you like and leave the rest.

I have assumed for these exercises that you have on hand supplies of scissors, glue, lined paper, coloured paper and art paper.

Whenever disadvantaged women get together, there exists the possibility that emotional and legal issues may arise that require professional guidance. The literacy worker (tutor or instructor) must prepare herself by establishing channels for referral for a range of community support services to meet the needs of her learners. (See "Responding to Disclosures of Abuse in Women's Lives," page 15.)

A. A Ceremony to Reclaim Our Potential

The objectives of this section are to share and symbolize past and present failures, pain and barriers to success in learning and in life, and to discard them.

1. Set the stage

➤ Place chairs in a circle. Place a small table or desk in the centre of the circle of chairs. On the table place a candle in a holder and a wide earthenware or metal bowl full of sand. The top part of a large outdoor ashtray would work well. Have a supply of paper strips and pens or pencils ready. Light the candle.
➤ Ask the learners to sit in the circle.

2. Guided discussion

➤ Some questions to consider:
- What are some symbols we use every day? (stop sign, rings, heart, cross).
- How do we use symbols?
- Why are they important?
- How are written words symbols?

➤ Introduce the idea of symbolizing the things that stopped them from learning in the past. Today they will symbolize all their personal barriers to success in words or symbols. They will hold a ceremony to discard them and so restore their potential for success in anything they undertake, especially literacy learning.

3. Writing

➤ Distribute strips of paper and pens or pencils to each learner. Keep a strip for yourself.
➤ Ask the learners to think of what stopped them from learning in the past. After a moment for thought, ask

them to write it down in single words or short phrases, using a single strip of paper for each thought. Those not yet able to write may make a shape or mark on their strips to represent each thought. They can use as many strips of paper as they need.

➤ Share your symbolized barriers with the group. Encourage the women to share the information on their paper strips, but let them know that they may pass if they wish. Give each learner in the group an opportunity to share.

If you cannot burn the strips in your classroom because of regulations or your smoke detectors, there are several options:

- move the whole ceremony outdoors, using a bonfire instead of a candle;
- do most of the ceremony inside, but go outside for the burning.

You could forgo the burning altogether and use some other way to destroy the barriers:

- gather all the strips up in an envelope and then cut the envelope in small pieces;
- give the learners full sheets of paper to write their barriers on and ask learners to run their papers through a paper shredder or cut them up on a paper cutter.

4. Burning

➤ As the leader, go to the table and use the candle to set your strip of paper on fire. Put the burning strip in the bowl of sand. Invite the learners, one at a time, to burn their strips.

5. Conclusion

➤ Share these thoughts:

> *"All the learners in the group, all the women here, have for now disposed of those things that have disrupted their learning and their lives. This does not mean that you will never have these problems again or that they have been erased forever. We, as women, have overcome much in the past to be here today. With this symbolic burning of the things that prevented us in the past, each of us reclaims our potential for success in learning and in life.*
>
> *"Because new problems arise from time to time to stop us from learning or living fully, we may perform this ceremony as often as we need to. If you feel that it is time to repeat the ceremony, whenever you are overwhelmed by your learning or your life, please let us know. We, too, may be ready without being aware of our need."*

This exercise may be repeated during the learning period, whenever the women learners show signs of losing faith in themselves.

➤ Discuss how such a ceremony can be used at home.

B. Our Helpers

The objectives of this section are to share personal information, to celebrate a particular personal relationship and to invoke a helper for each learner for the duration of learning.

In addition to the usual supplies, you will need corner stickers for mounting photos (or strips of paper, each with a slot cut into it) and lengths of patterned ribbon and lace for making a border around the mounted photo.

Ask learners to bring a photo of a favourite family member to class, someone that they wish to have close by them in spirit while they learn, a person alive or dead.

Those who do not have family photos may cut a picture from a magazine of a person they would choose to represent a family member. Supply scissors and magazines.

2. Guided discussion

➤ Make a decorated mounted photo with caption for yourself, to show learners before they start. Tell the learners the reason for the exercise and how it will be done. Point out that a caption underneath a picture gives information about it.

➤ Ask each learner in turn to show her photo and tell about it:

- if a photo of a family member, how she is related to the person in the photo and what she likes about her/him;
- if a picture from a magazine, who she wishes the person to represent in her family and why she chose that picture.

➤ Pass each picture around the circle so the group can take a look.

➤ Ask the learner whose turn it is to think of a caption for her photo and tell it to the group. The caption should have a name of the person, the relationship to the learner and the reason why the learner chose that person. Give help and/or ask for group help if the learner gets stuck.

➤ Take a turn as the tutor/instructor, but invoke your family member as helper for your instructing as well as learning to help the learners in the class. Pass your photo around the circle.

3. Photo display

➤ Pass out several half-sheets of lined paper to each learner. Ask the learners to write out their captions, using the extra sheets for drafts as necessary.

➤ Ask the learners to choose a coloured mounting sheet and ribbon or lace to glue as a border around their mounting sheet.

➤ Ask the learners to mount their photos, using corner mount stickers or paper strips with slots, and to glue the caption under the photo.

➤ Group members who have completed their task may help the others as needed.

➤ Display the photos in the classroom for the duration of the literacy learning.

For beginning learners not yet able to write by themselves, print the caption on a piece of paper as a model to copy.

Note: This exercise can also be done with small significant objects to represent the helpers. These objects could then be mounted on paper and decorated, or decorated paper display boxes can be made for them and captions attached to them.

Throughout the learning period, refer to the learners' helpers at times when the learning becomes difficult. Be sure to return the photos to the learners at the end of the program.

C. Confidential Dialogue Journal

The purpose of using confidential journals is to establish trust between the instructor and the learner and to establish non-threatening support for learners while they practise writing. You will need a quiet space to work individually with students, where no one can overhear you.

When you invite students to write in a confidential journal, you invite disclosures of all kinds.

In addition to the usual supplies, you will need journal notebooks (about half the size of a normal notebook so pages are small), book cover paper (metallic, coloured or patterned paper) and name stickers. You will also need copies of two or three word-search puzzles, or some other quiet activity that learners can do independently while they are waiting. I use a word-search puzzle as a fill-in activity because both literate learners and those newly acquainted with the alphabet are usually able to do them without help.

1. Guided discussion

➤ Discuss the meaning of the word "dialogue," the value of learners sharing their lives and the necessity of confidential personal supports for learning and in life. Discuss the safe-keeping of the journals. Perhaps you will keep them locked in a desk or file drawer.

2. Make a journal

➤ Distribute a blank journal notebook, name sticker, glue, scissors, pen or pencil to each learner. Ask them to choose a sheet of cover paper in the colour of their choice.

➤ Demonstrate how to make a cover by folding, cutting and pasting. Ask each of them to cover her journal, attach a name sticker and write her name on it.

3. Make the first journal entry

➤ Distribute word search paper puzzles to each learner. Ask those who are unable to write unaided to work quietly by themselves on the puzzles while they wait their turn for individual help. Ask those who are able to write to work on their puzzles after they have finished writing their journal entry.

➤ Ask writers to write only on the right-hand pages, putting the date at the top and leaving the left-hand pages for your responses. Ask them to write about yesterday, something that happened to them, how they felt and what they did. Say that one page only should be used for one entry, so they should choose carefully from the events of their day before.

➤ Go off to your private area with a beginning literacy learner with her journal. Ask the learner to dictate to you what she wants to write in her journal. Help her clarify her words in order to get the sense of what she says. Record her words, using printing rather than cursive writing until she has learned to write that way.

➤ Ask the learner to copy the entry onto the right page of her journal when she is back in class.

➤ Repeat the process until all the beginning literacy learners have dictated their journal entries.

➤ Allow enough time for the last beginning literacy learner to complete her task. Distribute another word-search paper puzzle, if necessary, to those who have finished their journal entries and puzzles.

4. Use the journals

➤ When all the learners have completed their entries, collect the journals.
➤ Respond in writing (printing where appropriate) on the left-hand pages of the journals in a supportive way as soon as possible, at least before the next learning session. Make sure that the journals are kept in the agreed-on safe place. Have them ready and on hand at the next learning session.
➤ Begin each learning session with this exercise. When a learner indicates in her journal that she wants counselling or other help, talk privately with her as soon as possible and make appropriate referrals.
➤ Periodically, perhaps during a private literacy learning progress check-up session, discuss the journal with the learner. Celebrate any improvements in her life during her participation by giving a symbol (a congratulatory card or other token) of her success. With permission of the learner, share and celebrate these occasions with the other women in the literacy learning group.

Some learners may be reluctant to do this exercise at first. After a few entries, most women enjoy sharing confidentially.

D. Same and Different

The objectives of this section are to explore similarities and differences and to have fun.

1. Get ready for the bingo game

➤ Prepare a mock bingo sheet like the one shown here, with sixteen large squares.
➤ In the top half of each square, write a short statement such as:

- I am a daughter.
- I am a mother.
- I am an aunt.

- I am a survivor.
- I like to eat land foods.
- I like to eat pizza.
- I like to go camping.
- I like to go hunting.
- I like to watch TV.
- I enjoy being with my family.
- I like to play games.
- I like to sew.
- I have a boyfriend/ husband.
- I enjoy music.
- I enjoy shopping.
- I like to cook.

I am a daughter	I am a mother	I am an aunt	I am a survivor
I like to eat land foods	I like to eat pizza	I like to go camping	I like to go hunting
I like to watch TV	I enjoy being with my family	I like to play games	I like to sew
I have a boyfriend / husband	I enjoy music	I enjoy shopping	I like to cook

➤ Make a copy of the sheet for each learner.

➤ Prepare a token prize (maybe an inexpensive low-level booklet) for the winner and consolation prize for all (perhaps cookies or candy to pass around).

The statements can be adjusted to suit the culture or background of the women in the learning group.

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2. Play the game

You may have to explain what initials are. Count the members of the group so people will know how many sets of initials they need to collect.

➤ Introduce the exercise by telling the learners that they will be playing a pretend bingo game. This bingo game will show how we may be alike and how we may be different. The winner will be the first person who collects all the initials of the learners in the group.

➤ Distribute the prepared bingo sheets and go over the statements in the boxes. Help with reading will be available during the game.

➤ Go over the instructions for the game:

- Talk to another learner and get that learner to put her initials in a square that describes her.
- Go on to another learner and do the same.
- The goal is to get everyone's initials on your sheet.
- When you have everyone's initials on your sheet, yell, "Bingo!"
- When someone yells "Bingo," stop until her sheet is checked.

➤ Present the prize to the winner and pass the consolation prizes around.

3. Guided discussion

➤ As a group, compare the initials on the bingo sheets. Some questions to consider:

- Were there any squares left empty? Which ones?
- Which squares had the most initials?
- How are we alike in this group? How are we different?
- In a group, what do we get from people who are the same as us?
- In a group, what do we get from people who are different from us?

➤ Make a list of major differences between people, such as race, religion, sexual orientation, and another list of minor differences, such as personal preferences, family size and so on.

➤ Look at the items on these lists in the light of the earlier discussion on the value of differences.

E. Feelings

The objectives of this section are to help learners validate their feelings by expressing them, and share them by speaking and writing with others. This exercise assumes that learners are acquainted with each other and have established some trust with each other already. You will need copies of pages 109 – 111 for each learner. Prepare an overhead or blow-up of the "How Do You Feel Today?" chart, without words, large enough so learners can see it clearly.

Prepare an example, using your own feelings, of the writing exercise, Section E-3, including a face. Just before the exercise, arrange a semi-circle of chairs, one for each learner, facing the flip chart stand or the blackboard.

1. Guided discussion

➤ Show learners the blown-up chart.

➤ Some questions to consider:

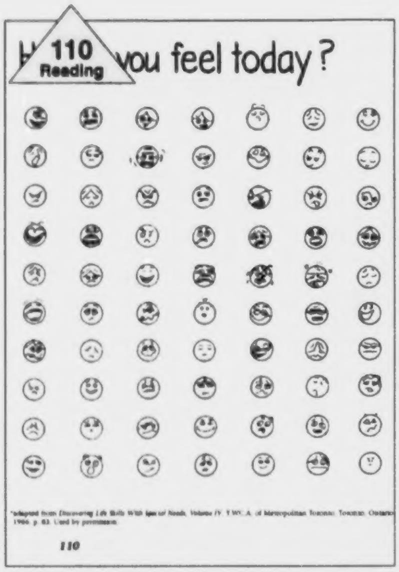
- Were you encouraged as a child to express your feelings?
- Are you encouraged to express your feelings as an adult in your family?
- What are some different family styles of expressing or not expressing feelings?

2. Matching feeling and pictures

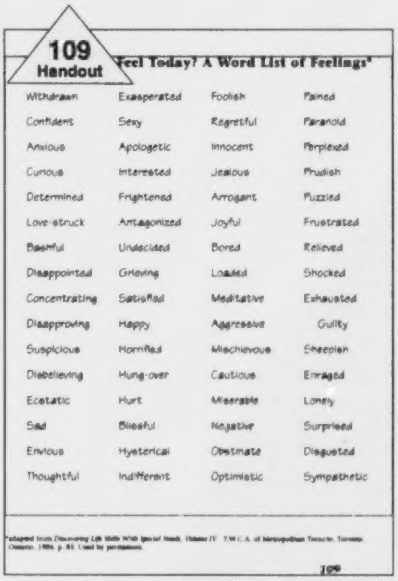
➤ Hand out the word list of feelings and the chart without words.

➤ Going around the circle of learners, ask each learner, one at a time, to match a cartoon facial expression on the chart with a feeling word. The group helps the learner if she gets stuck. Explain any unfamiliar words, giving examples.

➤ Ask the learner whose turn it is to write the feeling word matching the cartoon facial expression on a paper strip and to attach the paper strip to the blown-up feeling chart.



If you are using an overhead, ask her to come and write the word on the transparency. (It helps to use a water-soluble pen and have a wet paper towel handy.)



Feel Today? A Word List of Feelings*

Withdrawn
Confident
Anxious
Curious
Determined
Love-struck
Bashful
Disappointed
Concentrating
Disapproving
Suspicious
Disbelieving
Ecstatic
Sad
Envious
Thoughtful

Exasperated
Sexy
Apologetic
Interested
Frightened
Antagonized
Undecided
Grieving
Satisfied
Happy
Horrified
Hung-over
Hurt
Blissful
Hysterical
Indifferent

Foolish
Regretful
Innocent
Jealous
Arrogant
Joyful
Bored
Loaded
Meditative
Aggressive
Mischievous
Cautious
Miserable
Negative
Obstinate
Optimistic

Pained
Paranoid
Perplexed
Prudish
Puzzled
Frustrated
Relieved
Shocked
Exhausted
Guilty
Sheepish
Enraged
Lonely
Surprised
Disgusted
Sympathetic

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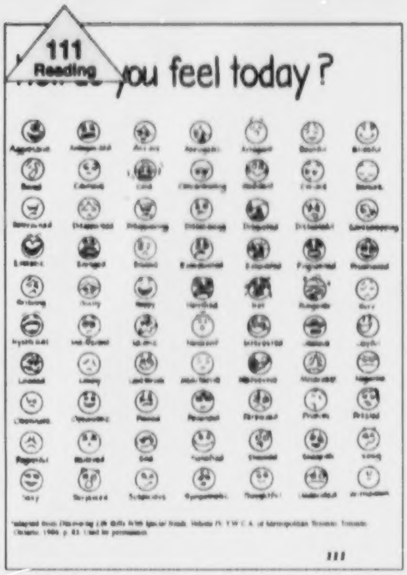


➤ The learners take turns until all the feeling words are matched. The blown-up feeling chart should have a feeling word below each cartoon facial expression.
➤ Ask the learners to copy the feeling words onto their "How Do You Feel Today?" charts, the feeling word underneath the face that matches it. They can use the complete chart, with words and faces, to check their work.

3. Writing

➤ Ask the learners to think back and remember how they felt this morning.
➤ Using the following format, ask them to write about their feelings:

"This morning I felt ________________________________
because ____."

Help the beginning learners by printing their short reasons for them to copy.
➤ Ask the learners to copy the cartoon face that matches their feeling word onto their sheets. Ask them to write the date on their half-sheets.
➤ Post up the sheets. Post up your own, too.

4. Guided discussion

➤ Ask all the learners to come and read the feelings and the reasons for them that have been posted.
➤ Some questions to consider:
- Did all the learners have the same feeling?
- What are the different feelings in the group?
- Do some learners in the group share the same feeling?
- Are the reasons for the same feeling different?
- This was the feeling they felt this morning – do they still feel that way now?

➤ Ask the group to come up with one or two sentences that sums up what they know about feelings.
➤ Give the sheets back to the learners. Ask them to copy or tape them into their confidential dialogue journals with the day's entry.

F. Response Writing

The objective of this section is to give learners a chance to practise expressing and writing an opinion in response to a stimulus.

1. Guided discussion

➤ Introduce the exercise, explaining what will be done and why.

➤ How do people respond to sounds and colours? Some questions to consider:

- How do movies, TV and magazines use sound and colour to set a mood?
- Give examples of parts of movies that make us cheerful, awed or scared. What sounds and colours produce these feelings?
- Introduce the thought that certain words and combinations of words can also have this kind of effect. Ask for and give examples from advertising.
- How does a first impression set the mood or the opinion we will have about a person, an event or a thing?

➤ Distribute copies of the stimulus article or story.

➤ Lay out a variety of coloured paper.

➤ Explain that you will read the article or story out loud and ask them to remain silent after the reading while they choose one colour that matches how they feel about what they have just heard.

➤ Read the stimulus piece, making sure that all the learners can see and hear you.

➤ Ask each learner to choose a sheet of coloured paper that matches her response.

➤ Show the blow-up of the feeling words to refresh the learners' memories.

➤ Ask each learner to show her coloured paper and say what feeling this colour represents and what it was about the piece she just heard that brought on that feeling.

➤ Take your turn when the learners have finished.

The stimulus may be a short item from a local newspaper or northern magazine, something that the learners will have strong feelings about: a recent drug bust, a recent accident or suicide, recent changes in social assistance rules, a discussion about which town would make the best capital of Nunavut region and so on. A short traditional story or legend may serve the purpose if it is about an issue that the learners identify with, such as the Inuit legend, "The Woman who went to the Moon," which is about what happens to a woman with an abusive husband. Another alternative, if you and the learning group agree, is to use a reading from a self-help daily reader as the stimulus.

2. Writing

➤ Hand out sheets of lined paper to the learners. They should be smaller than the coloured sheets so that, when they are mounted, a coloured border will show around the writing.

➤ Print the title of the stimulus article on a flip chart or on the blackboard for learners to copy. Print a list of all the colours that have been chosen, so learners can refer to it as needed.

Help those who are beginning writers by printing dictated words on a separate half-sheet of lined paper and have them copy their words.

➤ Ask the learners to write the title of the stimulus article, the colour they have chosen, the feeling it represents and what about the piece brought on that feeling for them, just as they had just told the group.

➤ Ask the learners to paste their finished writings onto the coloured paper as a backing and post them.

➤ Congratulate the learners because they have just written their opinions.

G. Photo Storybooks

The objectives of this section are to encourage learners to make decisions and plans and to have each one make a photo storybook. It is a lengthy exercise and may be spread over a number of learning sessions.

In addition to the usual supplies, you will need a camera and film enough for four photos for each learner, with an allowance for waste. I use a Polaroid camera for instant results. If you have access to 24-hour photo developing, a regular camera could be used.

You will need something to make the booklet covers, such as coloured paper, plastic report covers or covered cardboard.

1. Booklet construction

➤ Show learners a sample photo storybook which you have made to show the method of binding that you will use. Indicate the four photos with captions and the title on the cover.

➤ Ask learners to construct the booklets before they plan their stories, if they will be making their own covers. If not, ask them to choose the report cover they will use.

➤ While they are working, ask them to think about details of their life at school that they would like to put in a book to share with friends and family.

2. Story planning

➤ Ask the group to work together to plan their books around such themes as "What I Do at School," "My First Day in Class," "My School Day."

➤ Ask for a volunteer to plan her story. Ask the volunteer if she knows what she would like her story to be about. If she is stuck, get suggestions from the group. When she has chosen a theme, write her name on the flip chart along with her story theme.

➤ Draw four squares on the first volunteer's page on the flip chart, as a record of her plan. Draw similar squares on the blackboard to work things out initially. The learner, with help from the group, should plan the four photos that will tell her story. Stick figures and simple shapes will do.

➤ When the volunteer and the group are satisfied that the four planned photos will form a story, transfer the sketches onto the squares on the flip chart. Hang the page on the wall.

➤ Follow the same steps for each learner in the group until everyone has her story plan on the wall.

3. Picture production

➤ Choose the photographer according to experience and willingness. Ask for volunteer actors for staging the photos. The rest of the group will act as the critical audience of the photo poses.

➤ Have the photographer and the actors practise posing each person's planned photos according to the story-planning pages. Get the group's opinion as they practise for ways of improving the staging of the planned photos. Try to show people in action. When the group, and the person whose story it is, is satisfied with the poses, have the photographer take the photographs. Expect dud photos. Each learner should end up with four acceptable photos for her story.

➤ Ask each learner to tape her finished photos over the four squares on her posted story-planning page.

4. Caption writing and booklet completion

➤ Ask learners to write a caption for each photo on a strip of paper and attach it to her story-planning page.

➤ When all the captions are up on each learner's story-planning page, ask the learners to read all the stories. Ask them, "Are there spelling mistakes? Do the stories make sense?" Make the necessary corrections and changes on each story-planning page.

➤ Have the learners copy their photo captions neatly onto paper strips.

➤ Ask each learner to remove her photos from her story-planning flip chart, paste them into her prepared booklet and transfer the captions.

➤ Ask the learners to choose a title and write it on the cover of their prepared booklets

➤ Congratulate and praise each other – all have worked hard and have a photo storybook to show for it.

As usual, beginning writers can dictate their captions to you and learners can help each other.

If you have access to a number of computers and you and the learners are familiar with using them, they may want to print a caption at the bottom of each page and paste their photo above it.

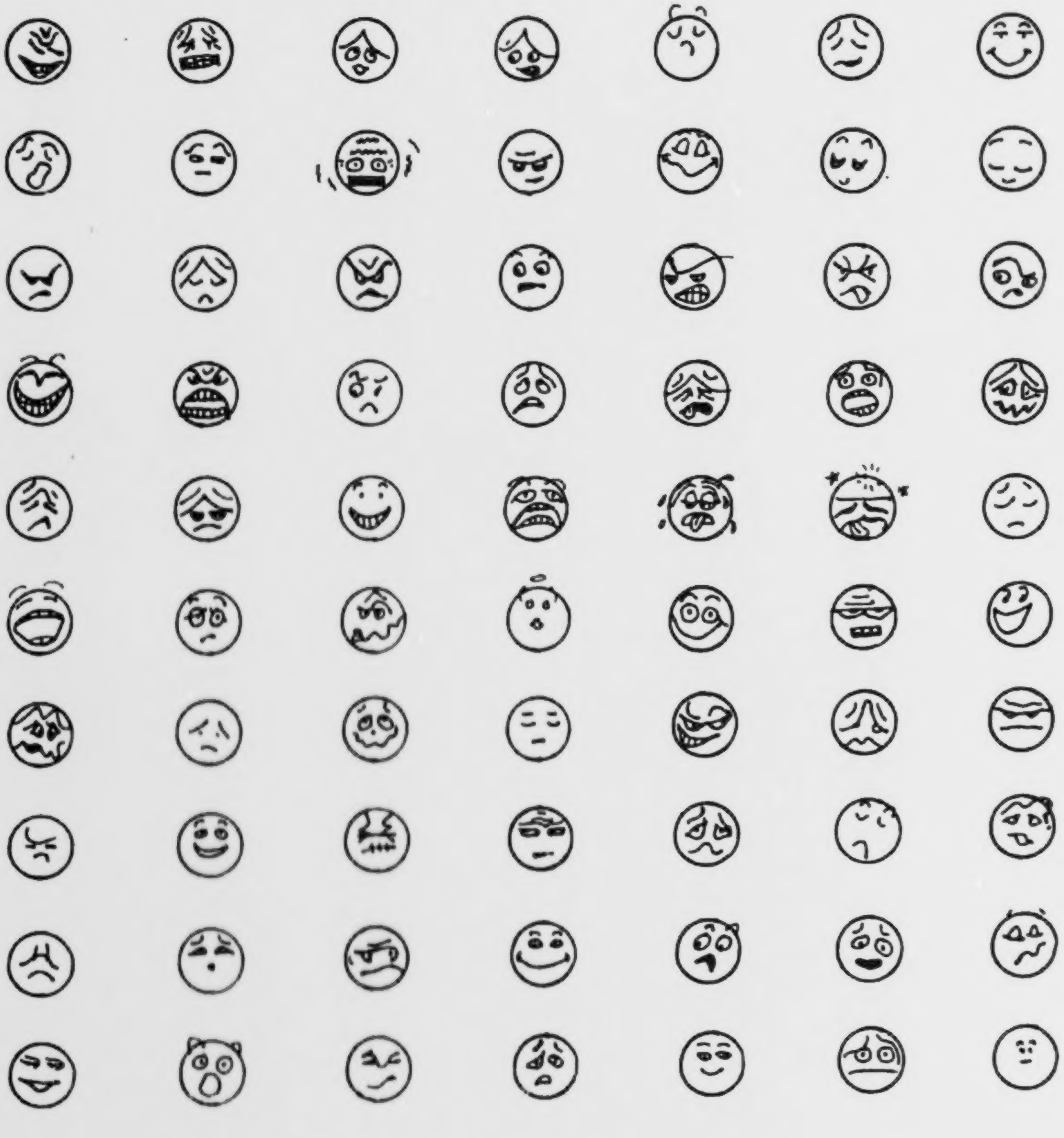
Successes build women's self-esteem. Recognize and celebrate them when they come. Strong self-esteem helps to sustain hope and faith when learning is difficult and when life becomes hard.

How Do You Feel Today? A Word List of Feelings

- Withdrawn
- Confident
- Anxious
- Curious
- Determined
- Love-struck
- Bashful
- Disappointed
- Concentrating
- Disapproving
- Suspicious
- Disbelieving
- Ecstatic
- Sad
- Envious
- Thoughtful
- Exasperated
- Sexy
- Apologetic
- Interested
- Frightened
- Antagonized
- Undecided
- Grieving
- Satisfied
- Happy
- Horrified
- Hung-over
- Hurt
- Blissful
- Hysterical
- Indifferent
- Foolish
- Regretful
- Innocent
- Jealous
- Arrogant
- Joyful
- Bored
- Loaded
- Meditative
- Aggressive
- Mischievous
- Cautious
- Miserable
- Negative
- Obstinate
- Optimistic
- Pained
- Paranoid
- Perplexed
- Prudish
- Puzzled
- Frustrated
- Relieved
- Shocked
- Exhausted
- Guilty
- Sheepish
- Enraged
- Lonely
- Surprised
- Disgusted
- Sympathetic

Adapted from *Discovering Life Skills With Special Needs, Volume 4,* Y.W.C.A. of Metropolitan Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, 1986, p. 83. Used by permission.

How do you feel today?



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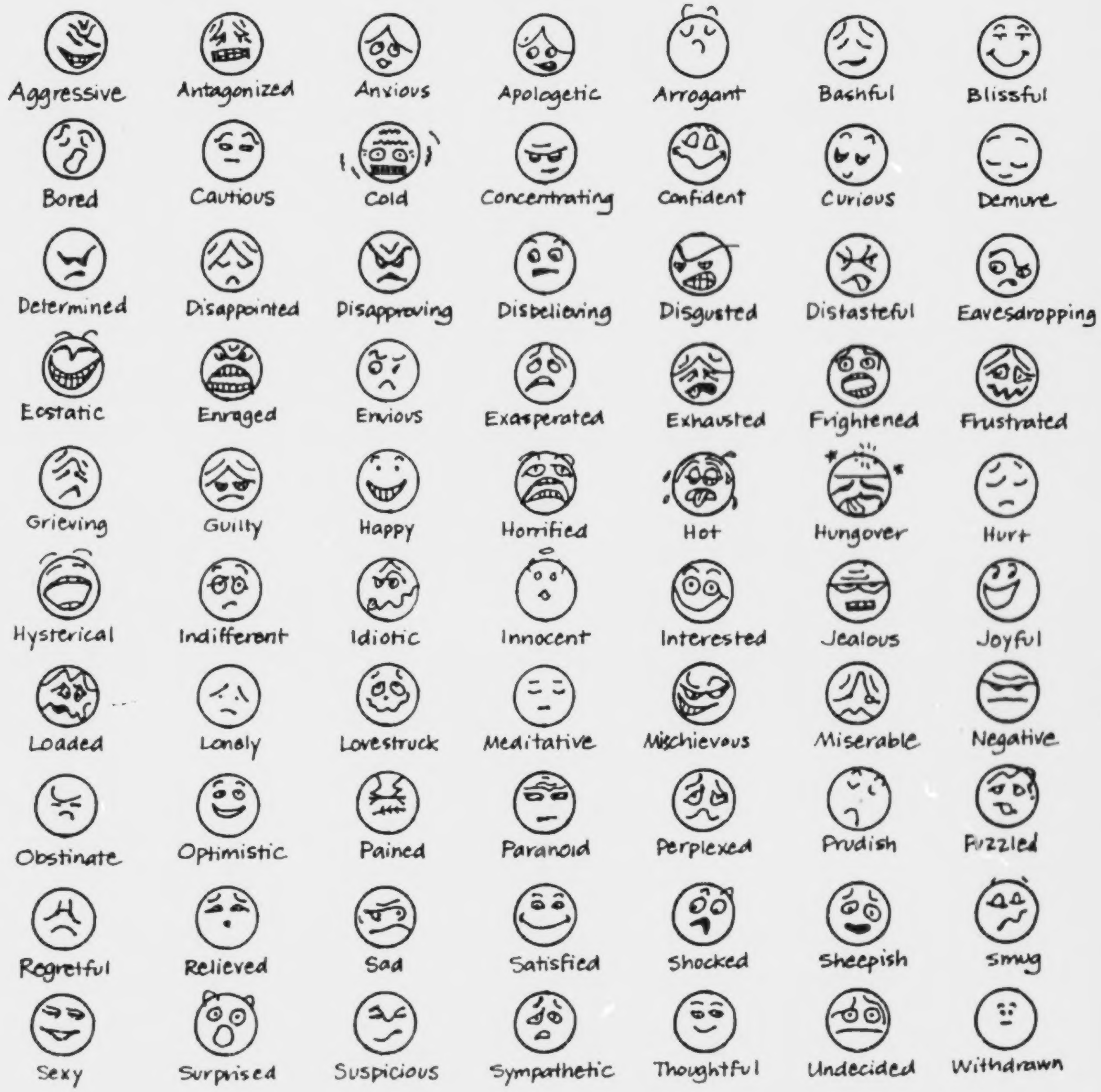
How do you feel today?


Aggressive
Antagonized
Anxious
Apologetic
Arrogant
Bashful
Blissful
Bored
Cautious
Cold
Concentrating
Confident
Curious
Demure
Determined
Disappointed
Disapproving
Disbelieving
Disgusted
Distasteful
Eavesdropping
Ecstatic
Enraged
Envious
Exasperated
Exhausted
Frightened
Frustrated
Grieving
Guilty
Happy
Horrified
Hot
Hungover
Hurt
Hysterical
Indifferent
Idiotic
Innocent
Interested
Jealous
Joyful
Loaded
Lonely
Lovestruck
Meditative
Mischievous
Miserable
Negative
Obstinate
Optimistic
Pained
Paranoid
Perplexed
Prudish
Puzzled
Regretful
Relieved
Sad
Satisfied
Shocked
Sheepish
Smug
Sexy
Surprised
Suspicious
Sympathetic
Thoughtful
Undecided
Withdrawn

Adapted from *Discovering Life Skills With Special Needs, Volume 4,* Y.W.C.A. of Metropolitan Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, 1986, p. 83. Used by permission.

4. Gender Roles

by Kate Nonesuch

Kate Nonesuch has been teaching literacy and Adult Basic Education, both English and math, for about ten years. She has been a feminist and a lesbian for longer than that. What interests her about teaching is how to get out of the way so people can learn. She spends a lot of time thinking about the intersections of class, race and sex privilege as they affect her work and her life, and likes to give workshops about her Never-Fail method of teaching writing.

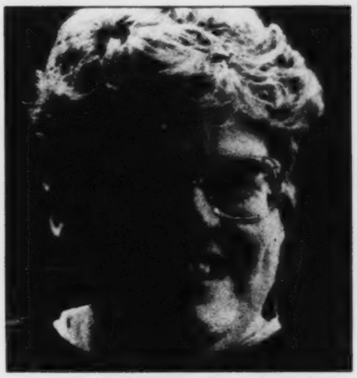


photo: Moon Joyce

Introduction

I was interested in writing a chapter on gender roles because the topic keeps coming up in my classes. I find the students already sharply aware of gender differences; they often make disparaging remarks about the other sex, and notice when opinions or preferences split along sex lines. Since my classes are always racially mixed, and often include people with disabilities, I spend several sessions at the beginning of each term working on welcoming diversity, and setting some ground rules for class participation; sexism is always part of that discussion.

Often I want to modify the gender roles in my classroom, so that women get a better chance to participate in the class, so that discussions aren't dominated by men and so that women don't have to do all of the socializing, nurturing work that makes a class successful. I welcomed a chance to produce some class work for this book that would let us examine gender roles together, and analyze some of the confusion that is part of daily life as gender roles change. My hope was also to produce a greater tolerance of those who step out of line.

There really are no "correct" answers for the activities. I often find that my interpretation of a given situation is different from a particular student's interpretation. When I want to make a feminist analysis of something, students may want to explain it in terms of someone's personal choice. "She's just like that. She likes to be a doormat." In my opinion, there is no point pushing a feminist analysis. It only sets up a power struggle, and while you are in a power struggle, no one is changing or learning. Instead, I try to focus on the breadth and depth of the students' contributions to discussions, making sure everyone has a chance to speak. I have been through this analysis many times before, but most students have never had the opportunity to look at these issues in an organized way. So I let them look. I know that they will come back to these ideas again and again.

Some students who field tested the unit, and asked to remain anonymous, had this to say:

- I learned there are nice guys out there as well as jerks. (A.L.)
- I now have confidence to stand up for myself and answer back if a man shouts at me. (L.J.)
- This unit gave us a different outlook on men and women. We learned awareness of men raising kids and women operating heavy equipment. (D.H.)
- I liked reading about the things women and men do (newspapers). I learned to say, "Some men/women . . . ," instead of "All men/women . . . ." (M.J.)
- I learned to speak up for myself. (P.H.)
- I see people as themselves and not divided into genders. (D.L.)

Early in the unit, instructors may want to make time for a statement or restatement of rules for discussion. Talking about gender roles seems to call forth a lot of anti-gay remarks, especially disparaging remarks about gay men. I like to take a few minutes near the beginning of the unit to remind people that our discussions will make most people uncomfortable from time to time, and that when people are uncomfortable, it is tempting to make fun of someone else, especially someone who is not here. I remind them, however, that about 10% of the population is gay, and that means that there may be one or two gay people in the room. I recap the general rules of tolerance that we have established in the classroom, and hope that there will be no remarks that make fun of gay and lesbian people.

When an anti-gay remark comes up, I deal with it in a variety of ways, depending on how much it catches me off guard. My least useful response is to ignore the remark. Sometimes I just clamp down tight and say, "You can't say things like that here." That at least is helpful to any gay people in the room, in that it makes the classroom discussions freer of homophobia. However, it does not do much to reduce homophobia when students meet outside of class.

When I am most successful, I am able to get a discussion going that turns on our reaction to people that are different. I try to include the person who made the remark in the "we," rather than making that person feel stupid or ugly for saying such a thing. For example, in reply to "Must be a fag if he does that!" I might ask, "Why do we feel uncomfortable when he does something that we don't expect? Why do we want to know in advance how someone will behave? How does it make life easier to assume that everyone is heterosexual?"

A. A Definition of Gender Roles

1. Guided discussion

➤ Show the students a drawing of the male/female figures usually found on the doors of public washrooms. These figures are very interesting because they differentiate the sexes by clothing, even though they are no longer accurate. Some questions to consider:

- Does the figure with pants on mean that this is the washroom for all people who wear pants?
- Does the figure with a skirt on mean only people wearing skirts can come in?
- Does anyone ever go into the wrong washroom because they misunderstand the signs?
- Why do we use these symbols for men and women? How long ago were they accurate in Canada?
- Are there places in the world where men wear skirts?
- We see these signs only on washrooms. Are there any other places where men are not allowed? Where women are not allowed?
- What is the difference between men and women?

Bridget Bruneski, who field tested the chapter, said that students who missed the discussions around a definition of gender role were confused, frustrated and had a negative attitude to the work of the chapter. She says, "I feel that the success of the unit really depended on a clear understanding of and involvement in the activities in sections A-1, B and D." Given her experience, you might want to do some review for people who miss these sessions, and leave the charts from Section B on the wall to refer to in later discussions.

➤ Introduce the term "gender role" to the students, perhaps by talking about the meaning of "role" as in role playing or acting.

As a way of introducing the term "gender role," it is best to get this question out of the way. The basic answer is the difference between male and female sexual organs, and following from that the fact that men can make women pregnant, and that women can bear and nurse children.

Encourage students to bring up other examples of the differences between men and women; these will be useful as examples of gender roles. The discussion will probably turn on exceptions to the generalities. For example, someone may say that men are taller and stronger than women, and you may have some examples in the group to disprove that statement. Someone may say that women are better cooks than men, and someone else will point to her brother who is a chef in a restaurant, or her sister who burns everything.

When we say "Most women, (but not all) do this," or "Most men, (but not all) do that," we have a statement of a gender role.

One dictionary meaning of gender is "sex." You may wish to use the term "sex role" instead of "gender role." Either now or after you have done Section B, the group should come to a common understanding of a gender or sex role as "the way you are supposed to behave if you are a woman, or the way you are supposed to behave if you are a man." Clearly lots of discussion is possible about the words "supposed to."

B. Gender Roles in Your Community

This section tries to define fairly closely what the gender roles are in the communities students belong to. There are many parts to this activity, and they could be spread over several sessions, according to the literacy skills of the students and time constraints.

1. Questionnaire

If you are working in a tutor/student pair, and come from different communities or classes, both tutor and student should answer the questions and compare answers; if you come from the same community, try to think of a community where things are done differently.

➤ If you have a group, divide them into smaller groups so that people who share cultural values are working together to answer the questions. The size of each small group doesn't matter. Some people may work alone. Sexes should be mixed.

➤ Give each group or pair or individual a copy of the questionnaire "Gender Roles in Your Community" (pages 126 – 128). Each group should come to an agreement on the answers, and fill in a single questionnaire. If group members can't reach an agreement on a particular question, ask them to leave it out.

126 Handout

Gender Roles in Your Community

out each question. Then write the answer your group agrees
wers to choose from.

a. Usually men do this.
b. Usually women do this.
c. Both men and women do this.

You can use a short form for each answer if you like, and write it beside the question.
Sometimes the question won't make much sense for your community. When that happens, you can leave out the question, or answer "nobody."

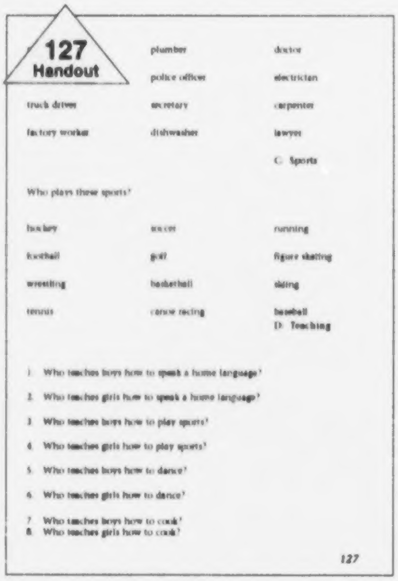
A. At Home

1. Who cooks most of the meals?
2. Who looks after the yard and garden if there is one?
3. Who cleans the bathroom?
4. Who washes the dishes?
5. Who does the laundry?
6. Who looks after the car?
7. Who stays home all day to look after the kids and the house?

B. At Work

1. Who has a job outside the home?
2. In a family, who has the most important job outside the home?
3. Who does each of these jobs:

126



127 Handout

truck driver
factory worker

plumber
police officer
secretary
dishwasher

doctor
electrician
carpenter
lawyer

C. Sports

Who plays these sports?

hockey
football
wrestling
tennis

soccer
golf
basketball
canoe racing

running
figure skating
skiing
baseball

D. Teaching

1. Who teaches boys how to speak a home language?
2. Who teaches girls how to speak a home language?
3. Who teaches boys how to play sports?
4. Who teaches girls how to play sports?
5. Who teaches boys how to dance?
6. Who teaches girls how to dance?
7. Who teaches boys how to cook?
8. Who teaches girls how to cook?

127

128 Handout

oys about sex?
about sex?
11. Who teaches boys about traditional ways?
12. Who teaches girls about traditional ways?
13. Who teaches boys good manners?
14. Who teaches girls good manners?
15. Who helps kids with homework?
16. Who teaches boys how to do housework?
17. Who teaches girls how to do housework?
18. Who teaches boys how to hunt and fish?
19. Who teaches girls how to hunt and fish?

E. Looking after Children

1. Who stays home with a sick kid?
2. Who tucks kids into bed at night?
3. Who reads stories to kids?
4. Who punishes kids when they have done something wrong?
5. Who visits the school and talks to the teachers about the kids?
6. Who does the shopping for clothes and other things kids need?
7. Who takes a sick kid to the doctor or the hospital?
8. Who gets kids up and dressed in the morning?
9. Who comforts a kid who gets hurt?

128

When I did this with my class I put some thought into deciding how to divide them into groups, according to the communities, racial and class, that I thought they belonged to. The groups I set up were: a group of First Nations people; two white women born in Canada, who later described themselves as working class; two white men born in Canada, who later described themselves as middle class; one white woman who had grown up in Italy and who came to Canada as a young woman, some 20 years ago.

I asked them to go into these groups by naming the individuals, not by naming the groups; when it came time to make the chart (Section B-2) I asked them to name their community themselves.

As they started to work on the questionnaire, I went around to each group to check that there was a fair amount of agreement on the answers. I found that inside most groups, people pretty much agreed, but when one group overheard another group talking, there was often disagreement between groups. I took this to mean that I had been fairly successful in dividing them up.

However, the group of First Nations students was having a lot of disagreement. I had asked all the First Nations people to form one group, as I knew they all had families living in the area. When there was so much disagreement on the answers, they soon figured out that those who had grown up in Duncan had different ideas from those who had grown up in the United States, even though some of their families were related, and their common heritage was Salish. They were happy to separate into two groups and after that they had no difficulty coming to an agreement inside each group.

2. Make a chart

➤ Ask each group to make a chart like the one shown on the following page, which will summarize the discussion they had while answering the questions.

➤ Ask them to fill in the name of community at the top.

3. Display the charts

➤ Ask each group to present its chart to the large group. Allow lots of time for questions and discussion and comparison. The class may want to display the charts on the wall.

➤ Review or introduce the definition of a gender role, and apply the term to the charts as they are presented to the large group.

Name of Community

Usually men do these things	Usually women do these things	Both men and women do these things

C. Wider Reading

1. Reading

➤ Ask students to choose a book to read that has some bearing on gender roles. They might read them individually or in pairs, or you might pick a book to read with a group of students.

This activity can be started at the beginning of the unit and continue through to the end. See Resources for books which deal with changing gender roles.

When students are asked to read on their own, they sometimes have difficulty finding a book they are interested in, and may not have strongly developed skills in picking interesting things to read. In my experience they may pick a book almost at random, and then are often reluctant to give it up once they have picked it, even though it is clear they are not reading it because it is boring or too difficult. I have several strategies to help students find books they will finish, and jettison ones they are stuck in.

First, I model my own healthy disrespect for the written word. I talk about my aversion to boredom. It doesn't matter if I am bored because I can't understand it, or because the writing is bad, or because I am not interested in the subject. If the book is boring, I give it up. I refuse to be bored. There are lots of interesting books, and not enough time to read them all. (Of course, a book can be hard to read and interesting at the same time; it can be interesting to one person and not to another. It is the boredom factor that matters, for whatever cause.)

Then I get a book of very easy-to-read short pieces, a magazine of student writing, for example. Starting at the first page, I ask someone to read the title out loud, and we look at any pictures or headings and the biography of the writer if there is one. I ask someone else to read the first sentence, and then ask if anyone is interested in reading the story. If someone says yes, we read it. If no one says yes, we go on to the next story. Usually in an hour a group can do about twenty pieces in this way, and everyone gets lots of practice in saying, "No, this doesn't look like something I'd want to read."

When it comes to asking students to choose a book for individual reading, I prepare an exercise for them to do before they choose. I select a few books that I think people in the group will be interested in, about twice as many books as there are students, trying to make sure there is something for everybody. In working with this theme, for example, I would use the books from the Resources list, and add others as necessary to make sure there was something suitable for everyone.

I put all the books in the middle of a table, and give students a list of questions that they can answer by a cursory examination of the books, particularly the copy on the back cover, or by looking at the illustrations. Some sample questions:

- Which book is about a single mom?
- Which book is about a truck driver?
- Which book shows pictures of women working?

I write questions that require them to pick up each book and look at it, and encourage them to work together and talk about the books as they answer the questions.

Then I ask each person to pick a book that s/he might like to read, and we do a quick round where everyone holds up a book and tells why s/he chose it. If there is someone who hasn't found an interesting book by this process, we go on a further search.

If you are working with a group of students, an interesting display of such reports can be made. When a second student reads the same book, the second report can be added to the same page. Displaying the pages encourages students to do a careful edit of their writing before it goes up on the board, gives other students reading practice and may introduce an interesting book to another student.

A student working with a tutor may want to keep a collection of the pages as a reminder of the books read.

When this chapter was field tested, "Wider Reading" was the favourite activity. The following activity, "Who Is Changing?" was the second favourite.

2. Reporting

➤ Ask students to report orally on the reading they have done. You might give them the following questions to help them get ready:

- What is the book about?
- What does the book have to say about changing gender roles?
- What are the results, both good and bad, when one of the characters tries to step outside the appropriate gender role?

➤ Make a photocopy of the cover of the book in the upper left hand corner of a large sheet of paper. Ask the student who read the book to write a few sentences, repeating or summarizing the oral report.

3. Guided discussion

There is lots of room for interesting discussion about changing gender roles when these books are read and reported on.

- Who gets points for changing roles?
- Is it easier for men or women to step outside their gender roles?
- Do people admire women who do men's work more than men who do women's work? Why?
- Who else has to change when someone steps outside their gender role?

D. Who Is Changing?

This activity may be modified in several ways. As written, it asks students to scan a pile of newspapers, about a month's worth, to look for stories about individuals. If such reading is too difficult, the instructor might bring in twenty or thirty stories for the students to put into categories, or the students might use back issues of an easy-to-read newspaper, or stories clipped from it. It is not necessary for students to read and understand every sentence in the stories; they are only required to get the main ideas – headlines alone might be enough in many cases. As well, students will get a chance to read some of the stories four or five times, and discuss them with other students, so stories that seem difficult at first will become easier to read.

The activity calls for two bulletin board spaces if there is a group of students. A tutor/student pair might make two scrapbooks of the stories.

1. Find the stories

➤ Ask students to go through back issues of newspapers to look for stories about individuals, men or women or children. The only stipulation is that the story must be about a person. For example, a story about the latest developments in a war, what the UN involvement is and where the lines are now drawn, is not appropriate to this exercise, but a story about one soldier's heroic or heinous deeds will work.

➤ Find as many stories as possible.

2. Sort the stories

➤ Sort the stories into two groups, those about men and those about women.

➤ Half the students should take the stories about women to one bulletin board space, and half take the stories about men to the other space. The groups of students should be of both genders.

➤ Ask each group to sort their stories into several categories:

- sports
- life at home
- politics
- work
- romance
- war
- violence
- school

➤ Encourage the students to discuss the stories and decide what category each belongs to.

➤ Feel free to add categories as needed.

➤ Ask students to display their stories on the board in

The instructor might put up the category labels so the students can group stories around each label, or the students might make the labels themselves. For a more difficult exercise, do not suggest categories; ask the students to sort the stories and name the categories themselves.

groups with the categories labelled.
➤ Be sure that the display or scrapbook makes it is easy to see what stories belong in which categories.

3. Analyze the stories

➤ Divide the students into pairs; ask each pair to take the stories in one of the categories, either on the male side or the female side. It doesn't matter what sex the pairs are.
➤ Give every pair a set of markers – ribbons, sticky dots, sticky tape, coloured pins or whatever – in two colours. One colour is to mark stories in which the person followed the accepted gender model for his/her sex; the other colour is to mark stories in which the person stepped outside the accepted gender role.
➤ Ask the students to analyze each story, jointly decide if the person stayed inside the appropriate gender role or stepped outside it, and mark the story with the chosen colour.
➤ When a pair of students has marked all the stories in one category, they can take another category that has not been done yet, until every story has been analyzed.

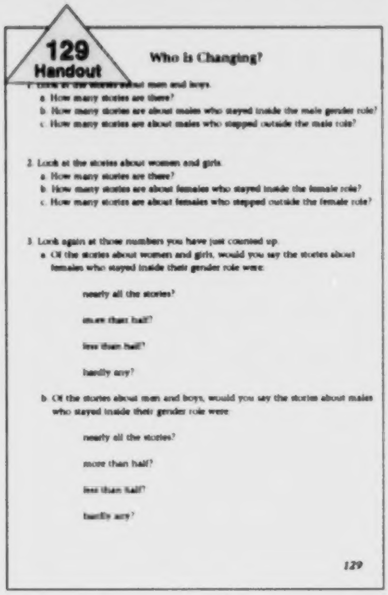
Make sure everyone in the class follows the same code, for example, green for people who followed accepted gender roles and red for people who did not.

Which standards do you use to decide if the person is inside or outside the appropriate gender role? This question will probably come up in the light of the discussions you have had while doing the activities in Section B. Try to use the information in each story to decide what cultural standards apply to the person. Students will find clues in the story such as, "First woman to . . . ," "People laughed when they saw a man . . . ," "In the *** community, men usually . . ., but I . . . ." Encourage discussion. There may be some stories that cannot be marked because there is not enough information, or because the students cannot come to an agreement.

4. Read the displays

➤ Hand out the question sheet "Who Is Changing?" (pages 129 – 130).
➤ Share the answers.

Individuals can work on their own sheets if their skills are high enough, but pairs or small groups can work together, with one person writing the answers, if that suits their skills better.



Who is Changing?

1. Look at the stories about men and boys.
   - a. How many stories are there?
   - b. How many stories are about males who stayed inside the male gender role?
   - c. How many stories are about males who stepped outside the male role?
2. Look at the stories about women and girls.
   - a. How many stories are there?
   - b. How many stories are about females who stayed inside the female role?
   - c. How many stories are about females who stepped outside the female role?
3. Look again at those numbers you have just counted up.
   - a. Of the stories about women and girls, would you say the stories about females who stayed inside their gender role were:

     nearly all the stories?

     more than half?

     less than half?

     hardly any?
   - b. Of the stories about men and boys, would you say the stories about males who stayed inside their gender role were:

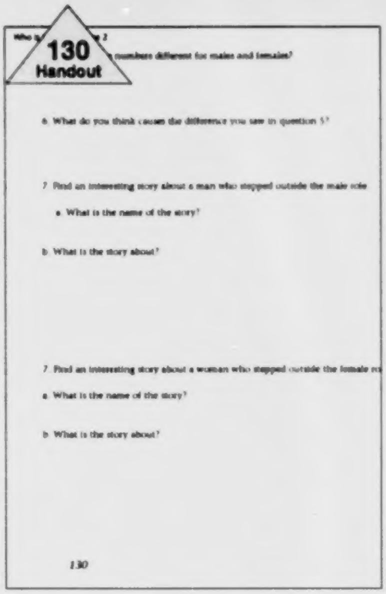
     nearly all the stories?

     more than half?

     less than half?

     hardly any?

129



numbers different for males and females?

6. What do you think causes the difference you saw in question 5?

7. Find an interesting story about a man who stepped outside the male role
   - a. What is the name of the story?
   - b. What is the story about?

7. Find an interesting story about a woman who stepped outside the female ro
   - a. What is the name of the story?
   - b. What is the story about?

130

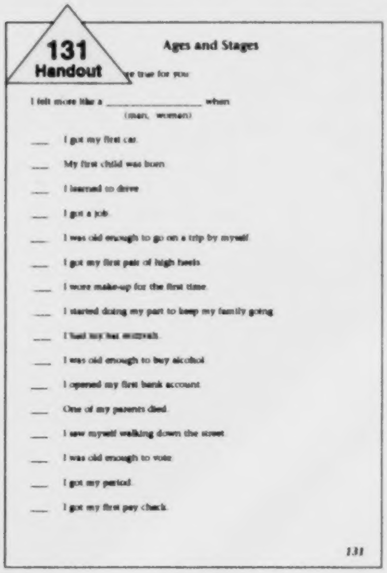
This is an interesting exercise to take up together, since the first few questions give you a chance to talk about numbers and what they mean; there are no correct answers to the last few questions; have students read their answers to each other, or to the large group. Were there some stories that many people picked? Discuss what made these stories so interesting.

In the field testing, results were: 34 stories about males, 8 of whom stepped out of the male role; 19 stories about females, 10 of whom stepped outside of the female role.

E. Personal Development

1. Writing

➤ Hand out the checklist "Ages and Stages" (pages 131 – 132). Ask them to fill in the blank at the top of the page with "man" or "woman" as appropriate.



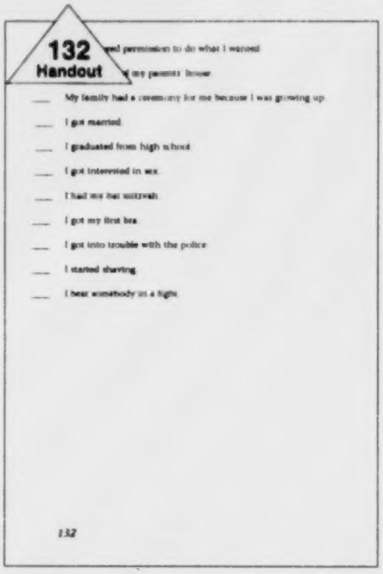
Ages and Stages

e true for you

I felt more like a _______________ when
(man, woman)

___ I got my first car
___ My first child was born
___ I learned to drive
___ I got a job
___ I was old enough to go on a trip by myself
___ I got my first pair of high heels
___ I wore make-up for the first time
___ I started doing my part to keep my family going
___ I had my bat mitzvah
___ I was old enough to buy alcohol
___ I opened my first bank account
___ One of my parents died
___ I saw myself walking down the street
___ I was old enough to vote
___ I got my period
___ I got my first pay check

131



ed permission to do what I wanted
d my parents' house
___ My family had a ceremony for me because I was growing up
___ I got married
___ I graduated from high school
___ I got interested in sex
___ I had my bar mitzvah
___ I got my first bra
___ I got into trouble with the police
___ I started shaving
___ I beat somebody in a fight

132

In the field testing, some students were upset about parts of the checklist that refer to sex and menstrual periods. You may want to take those items off the list before you give it to students, or stress in advance that students do not need to share their answers with anyone, and that the checklists will not be posted or handed in.

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Students may be interested in writing several pieces, each piece about one of the things they checked off.

You might want to notice if there are any patterns in the group. Were there things, such as learning to drive, that both sexes do, but that seem to be more important to the image of one sex than the other?

Hats is a delightful book from the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, London, England. Eleven pieces of poetry and prose cover such themes as women's roles (the hats they wear), the constrictions of life as a housewife, a woman's pride in her daughter becoming a plumber, friendship, a single mother who is a truck driver, and so on.

➤ Ask students to check things that were important to them as they grew from a child to a man or woman.
➤ Then ask the students to pick one of the items that they checked and write about it, for example, their bar or bat mitzvah, or the day they got their first car. The important point is that they write about one specific thing.
➤ Share the writing in the usual way.

2. Reading: *Hats*

➤ Read some or all of the selections in *Hats*.

➤ Suggested activities:
- Read selections aloud and discuss them.
- Ask students to read them to each other, or to read a favourite part to the class.
- Use some of the pieces as a Readers' Theatre production.
- After you have read some or all of them in class, ask students to pick a favourite selection to perform for the class as a whole.
- Ask students to write similar pieces to talk about the roles of women they know.
- Ask students to write similar pieces about the roles men play.

F. How Are We Changing?

1. Make a list

➤ Divide your students into two groups, men and women.
➤ Ask each group to make a list of things the group members do which their parents or their grandparents did not do.
➤ Ask them to think of reasons for these changes.
➤ Each group should make a presentation of its list and reasons to the other group.

2. Writing

➤ Ask students to write on one of the following topics, or on any other that grows out of the previous discussion:

- I can do many things my mother/father could not do.
- I have more freedom than my mother/father.
- Life was easier when roles were clearer.
- Changing gender roles cause big problems for everybody.
- The world is a better place when everyone has more freedom to choose.
- Men and women should stay in their places.
- My children will be able to choose for themselves.

➤ Share this writing in your usual way.

Resources

The following books deal with the theme of gender roles, and are at a literacy reading level. (See the Bibliography for complete listings.)

English, Betty Lou. *Women at Their Work*
Holt, Julia et al. *Hats*
Keller, Rosanne. *Woman's Work, Man's Work*
Participatory Research Group. *Women's Kit.* "Women's Days" and "Housework"
Reed, Fran. *A Dream with Storms*
Reiff, Tana. *A Place for Everyone*
Reiff, Tana. *The Door is Open*

Gender Roles in Your Community

Talk in your group about each question. Then write the answer your group agrees on. There are three answers to choose from:

a. Usually men do this.
b. Usually women do this.
c. Both men and women do this.

You can use a short form for each answer if you like, and write it beside the question.

Sometimes the question won't make much sense for your community. When that happens, you can leave out the question, or answer "nobody."

A. At Home

1. Who cooks most of the meals?
2. Who looks after the yard and garden if there is one?
3. Who cleans the bathroom?
4. Who washes the dishes?
5. Who does the laundry?
6. Who looks after the car?
7. Who stays home all day to look after the kids and the house?

B. At Work

1. Who has a job outside the home?
2. In a family, who has the most important job outside the home?

3. Who does each of these jobs:

- nurse's aide
- clerk in a store
- truck driver
- factory worker
- plumber
- police officer
- secretary
- dishwasher
- doctor
- electrician
- carpenter
- lawyer

C: Sports

1. Who plays these sports?

- hockey
- football
- wrestling
- tennis
- soccer
- golf
- basketball
- canoe racing
- running
- figure skating
- skiing
- baseball

D: Teaching

1. Who teaches boys how to speak a home language?
2. Who teaches girls how to speak a home language?
3. Who teaches boys how to play sports?
4. Who teaches girls how to play sports?
5. Who teaches boys how to dance?
6. Who teaches girls how to dance?
7. Who teaches boys how to cook?

8. Who teaches girls how to cook?
9. Who teaches boys about sex?
10. Who teaches girls about sex?
11. Who teaches boys about traditional ways?
12. Who teaches girls about traditional ways?
13. Who teaches boys good manners?
14. Who teaches girls good manners?
15. Who helps kids with homework?
16. Who teaches boys how to do housework?
17. Who teaches girls how to do housework?
18. Who teaches boys how to hunt and fish?
19. Who teaches girls how to hunt and fish?

E. Looking after Children

1. Who stays home with a sick kid?
2. Who tucks kids into bed at night?
3. Who reads stories to kids?
4. Who punishes kids when they have done something wrong?
5. Who visits the school and talks to the teachers about the kids?
6. Who does the shopping for clothes and other things kids need?
7. Who takes a sick kid to the doctor or the hospital?
8. Who gets kids up and dressed in the morning?
9. Who comforts a kid who gets hurt?

Who Is Changing?

1. Look at the stories about men and boys.
   a. How many stories are there?
   b. How many stories are about males who stayed inside the male gender role?
   c. How many stories are about males who stepped outside the male role?

2. Look at the stories about women and girls.
   a. How many stories are there?
   b. How many stories are about females who stayed inside the female role?
   c. How many stories are about females who stepped outside the female role?

3. Look again at those numbers you have just counted up.
   a. Of the stories about women and girls, would you say the stories about females who stayed inside their gender role were:

      nearly all the stories?

      more than half?

      less than half?

      hardly any?

   b. Of the stories about men and boys, would you say the stories about males who stayed inside their gender role were:

      nearly all the stories?

      more than half?

      less than half?

      hardly any?

5. How were the numbers different for males and females?

6. What do you think causes the difference you saw in question 5?

7. Find an interesting story about a man who stepped outside the male role.

   a. What is the name of the story?

   b. What is the story about?

7. Find an interesting story about a woman who stepped outside the female role.

   a. What is the name of the story?

   b. What is the story about?

Ages and Stages

Check the ones that are true for you:

I felt more like a ____________________ when
(man, woman)

____ I got my first car.

____ My first child was born.

____ I learned to drive.

____ I got a job.

____ I was old enough to go on a trip by myself.

____ I got my first pair of high heels.

____ I wore make-up for the first time.

____ I started doing my part to keep my family going.

____ I had my bar mitzvah.

____ I was old enough to buy alcohol.

____ I opened my first bank account.

____ One of my parents died.

____ I saw myself walking down the street.

____ I was old enough to vote.

____ I got my period.

____ I got my first pay check.

____ I didn't need permission to do what I wanted.
____ I moved out of my parents' house.
____ My family had a ceremony for me because I was growing up.
____ I got married.
____ I graduated from high school.
____ I got interested in sex.
____ I had my bat mitzvah.
____ I got my first bra.
____ I got into trouble with the police.
____ I started shaving.
____ I beat somebody in a fight.

5.Cultural Awareness Activities

by Alice Li

AFTER receiving my university education in Canada, I volunteered at various adult English schools in the Kitchener-Waterloo region. Sigrid Anderson, the teacher with whom I worked closely, took me under her wing and enthralled me with the art of teaching EAL. I have taught in community-based organizations, adult learning centres, night schools and workplaces. I have also been the instructor and co-ordinator for the English Program for International Graduate Students from the Faculties of Science and Engineering at the University of Waterloo.

photo: Michael Vadera

Introduction

My interest in cultural awareness originated from my experiences as a Chinese-Canadian. For the past seven years, while adjusting to a new lifestyle, I have become more aware of my own culture. This has perhaps been one way to preserve and re-establish my identity in Canada. Since I started teaching, I have also observed this attitude among my learners who, once in a while, become nostalgic about their cultures and traditions. Their nostalgia is revealed in their eagerness to discuss facets of their cultures; exchanges of views have become an important part of my classes.

This wealth of cultural information that is readily available among learners could be used to create activities and lesson plans. Not only would the learners' experiences be acknowledged, but everyone would also have the opportunity to learn from each other. I have certainly learnt a lot from my learners who brought with them unique experiences and cultural backgrounds. On the other hand, teachers also have to recognize that some learners are not very strongly interested in cultural issues.

I hope that this chapter, consisting of cross-cultural activities and lesson plans that explore feminist issues, will enable learners and teachers to examine some issues relevant to women from different cultural perspectives.

Many of the following lesson plans involve group work. Insightful discussions might ensue from learners grouped according to their gender, marital status, or cultural background. It is important that learners feel comfortable and safe in their group. Therefore, groupings may be made according to alternative considerations.

Group discussions involve roles of facilitating, note-taking, and reporting that are best assigned to each member at the beginning of the activity. If there are more learners in a group than tasks, learners should share tasks. Even though the teacher is not always there to oversee their discussion, learners should take the initiative in monitoring their own progress.

For group, pair or individual activities, a time limit should be given at the beginning and towards the end of the activity. Instructors should base the time limit on the learners' level, the amount of work required to complete the assigned task, as well as the extent and expected quality of the "product" (in most cases a report or presentation). From the outset, learners should understand clearly what they are asked to do.

A. Names

The objectives of this section are to examine the importance of names and gender differences, and to get to know each other better. A book of names with their meanings will be useful.

1. Learning about our names

➤ Ask each learner to translate his or her name into English, or to explain the meaning in English, and to write this information on a piece of paper, without signing it.

➤ Collect and redistribute the slips to the groups. Ask each learner to read the information which appears on the slip s/he has just been given, and invite the group to take turns guessing whose name it is.

2. Learning more about our names

➤ Ask learners to take a large piece of paper, and, writing large so others can read it from a distance, write her or his name in English in the centre.

➤ Ask learners to write the answer to any of the following questions at the four corners:

- Who chose your name?
- Why was this name chosen? Does this name commemorate a family member?
- What expectations do your parents and your family associate with this name?
- What qualities or words would you associate with this name?
- What do you like or dislike about your name?

➤ Learners walk around the room holding the slip of paper in front of them and reading what the others have written down on their papers.

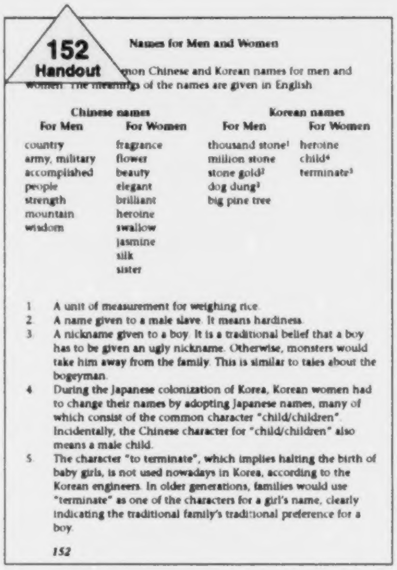
➤ Each learner introduces another learner by recalling what was written on his or her slip of paper.

You could use one or both of these activities, which focus on first or given names. Some learners might be able to explain the origin or the meanings of their last names as well.

3. Reading: "Names for Men and Women"

The information in this reading comes from an excellent discussion which emerged from the previous topic, when we talked about names given to women and men. I certainly learnt a lot from my group of four engineers, two Chinese and two Koreans. The fact that the two Koreans recognized Chinese characters facilitated the communication among the group.

➤ With your group, read "Names for Men and Women" (page 152).



152
Handout

Names for Men and Women

mon Chinese and Korean names for men and women. The meanings of the names are given in English

Chinese names		Korean names	
For Men	**For Women**	**For Men**	**For Women**
country	fragrance	thousand stone[1]	heroine
army, military	flower	million stone	child[4]
accomplished	beauty	stone gold[2]	terminate[5]
people	elegant	dog dung[3]	
strength	brilliant	big pine tree	
mountain	heroine		
wisdom	swallow		
	jasmine		
	silk		
	sister		

1 A unit of measurement for weighing rice.
2 A name given to a male slave. It means hardiness.
3 A nickname given to a boy. It is a traditional belief that a boy has to be given an ugly nickname. Otherwise, monsters would take him away from the family. This is similar to tales about the bogeyman.
4 During the Japanese colonization of Korea, Korean women had to change their names by adopting Japanese names, many of which consist of the common character "child/children". Incidentally, the Chinese character for "child/children" also means a male child.
5. The character "to terminate", which implies halting the birth of baby girls, is not used nowadays in Korea, according to the Korean engineers. In older generations, families would use "terminate" as one of the characters for a girl's name, clearly indicating the traditional family's traditional preference for a boy.

152

In many parts of Canada, First Nations people were given names by colonizing missionaries. At first, they were simply given first names which were almost like labels. They were common informal British names such as Jim, Bob, Johnny, Bill, George, Peter. (To the colonizers, males were important, so male names were given as family names. Women usually were given Christian names after conversion.) When a child was born to "Bob" or "Jim," he was often given the name of another relative, for example, "Jimmy Bob." Today, there are many families whose last name is Jim, George, Jimmy, or Joe. The first name of people in these families may also be George or Peter or Joe. This information comes from Evelyn Battell, who spoke with members of the Cowichan Tribes, especially Louise Underwood.

➤ Based on the Korean and Chinese names, consider the following questions:

- What do you think are the roles played by women and men?
- What name would you give to your child?
- Do you think that gender differences exist in English names?
- What do you think about these names: Chastity, Patience, Hope, Faith, Gloria, Jasmine, Daisy, Rose, Mary, Christian?
- If you could choose a new name, what would it be?

This would be a good time to introduce or review the use of the second conditional: "If + past tense, I would, should, might, could . . ."

4. Guided discussion

➤ Some questions to consider:
- What naming ceremonies or rituals did you undergo?
- Do you have a ceremonial name? 💔
- What are some of the popular names given to women, men, and children in your language or culture? What do these names mean?

💔 In some cultures ceremonial names are secret; before asking if anyone would like to share their ceremonial names, acknowledge with respect that many such names are secret and not for sharing outside the ceremonial circle.

5. Writing

➤ Some topics:
- My name
- If I could change my name . . .
- My children's names

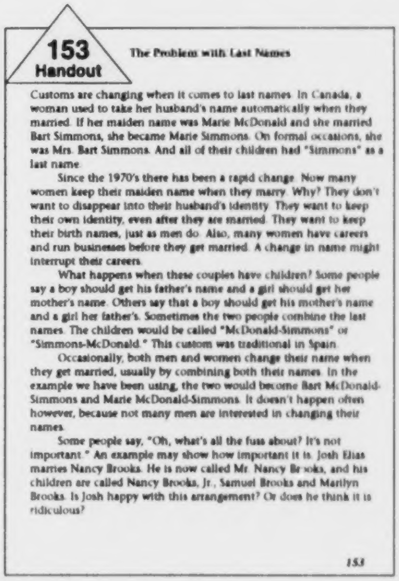
6. Reading

➤ As a pre-text activity, put the following cluster of words from "The Problem with Last Names" (page 153) on the board:

traditional last name
birth name
automatically customs
married name

identity career
maiden name
husband Mr. Mary Jones

➤ Discuss meanings and clarify pronunciation. There could even be a discussion of the antonyms or synonyms of the words on the list.
➤ Ask learners, in groups or as a class, to create a text based on the list of words.
➤ Read the text (page 153) and discuss it further.



153
Handout

The Problem with Last Names

Customs are changing when it comes to last names. In Canada, a woman used to take her husband's name automatically when they married. If her maiden name was Marie McDonald and she married Bart Simmons, she became Marie Simmons. On formal occasions, she was Mrs. Bart Simmons. And all of their children had "Simmons" as a last name.

Since the 1970's there has been a rapid change. Now many women keep their maiden name when they marry. Why? They don't want to disappear into their husband's identity. They want to keep their own identity, even after they are married. They want to keep their birth names, just as men do. Also, many women have careers and run businesses before they get married. A change in name might interrupt their careers.

What happens when these couples have children? Some people say a boy should get his father's name and a girl should get her mother's name. Others say that a boy should get his mother's name and a girl her father's. Sometimes the two people combine the last names. The children would be called "McDonald-Simmons" or "Simmons-McDonald." This custom was traditional in Spain.

Occasionally, both men and women change their name when they get married, usually by combining both their names. In the example we have been using, the two would become Bart McDonald-Simmons and Marie McDonald-Simmons. It doesn't happen often however, because not many men are interested in changing their names.

Some people say, "Oh, what's all the fuss about? It's not important." An example may show how important it is. Josh Elias marries Nancy Brooks. He is now called Mr. Nancy Brooks, and his children are called Nancy Brooks, Jr., Samuel Brooks and Marilyn Brooks. Is Josh happy with this arrangement? Or does he think it is ridiculous?

153

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B. Roles of Men and Women

The objectives of this section are to explore learners' perceptions about the responsibilities of men and women, to compare the roles of men and women in Canada and other countries and to talk about non-traditional roles and their significance in different cultures.

1. Guided discussion

There are two activities here. Pick one or the other to do with your group. If you choose to do the first activity, you will need a collection of pictures of men and women in non-traditional roles, preferably from various cultures. You could collect the pictures yourself, or invite learners to collect them.

➤ Look at the pictures, especially any of men and women engaged in different household chores. What do you see in each picture? Some questions to consider:

- How do you feel when you see men and women in non-traditional roles?
- Are role-reversals acceptable or common in your culture?
- What are the defined roles for men and women in your culture?

OR

➤ Elicit from the learners a list of various household chores or tasks, for example, shopping, cooking, putting up a book shelf, taking out garbage, washing the car.

➤ Invite learners to classify these tasks according to gender roles and share their categorizations.

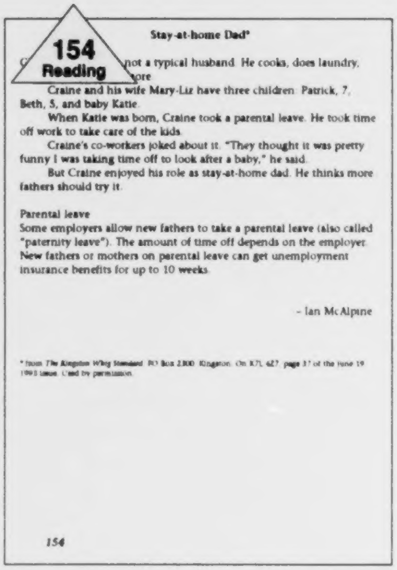
- Who is responsible for these household duties in your culture? A man or a woman?
- What about in Canada? How does your culture compare to that of mainstream Canadian culture regarding this issue?

2. Reading: "Stay-at-home Dad"

➤ Read the story to the learners and ask them to share what they have heard (page 154).

➤ Distribute the text and ask learners to read silently and underline words that they do not understand.

➤ Ask learners to take turns reading aloud a part of the story. When necessary, for example, after every turn, the teacher should ask comprehension questions or explain new words.


154
Reading

Stay-at-home Dad*

C not a typical husband. He cooks, does laundry, ore

Craine and his wife Mary-Liz have three children: Patrick, 7, Beth, 5, and baby Katie.

When Katie was born, Craine took a parental leave. He took time off work to take care of the kids.

Craine's co-workers joked about it. "They thought it was pretty funny I was taking time off to look after a baby," he said.

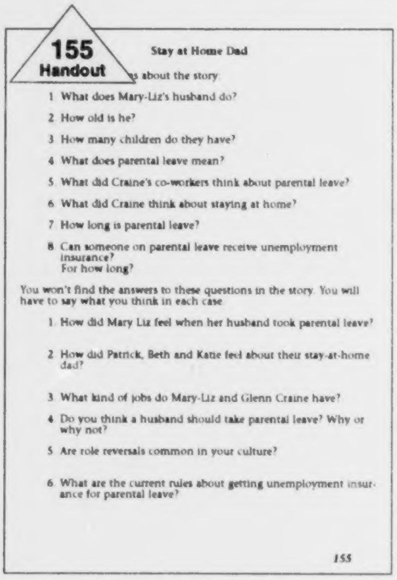
But Craine enjoyed his role as stay-at-home dad. He thinks more fathers should try it.

Parental leave
Some employers allow new fathers to take a parental leave (also called "paternity leave"). The amount of time off depends on the employer. New fathers or mothers on parental leave can get unemployment insurance benefits for up to 10 weeks.

- Ian McAlpine

154

➤ Ask learners to do some or all of the comprehension questions on this story (page 155).


155
Handout

Stay at Home Dad

s about the story

1. What does Mary-Liz's husband do?
2. How old is he?
3. How many children do they have?
4. What does parental leave mean?
5. What did Craine's co-workers think about parental leave?
6. What did Craine think about staying at home?
7. How long is parental leave?
8. Can someone on parental leave receive unemployment insurance?
   For how long?

You won't find the answers to these questions in the story. You will have to say what you think in each case.

1. How did Mary Liz feel when her husband took parental leave?
2. How did Patrick, Beth and Katie feel about their stay-at-home dad?
3. What kind of jobs do Mary-Liz and Glenn Craine have?
4. Do you think a husband should take parental leave? Why or why not?
5. Are role reversals common in your culture?
6. What are the current rules about getting unemployment insurance for parental leave?

155

This reading was an emotional experience for a group of intermediate learners who had been together for two years. They responded in the following ways: They did not understand the word "dad." One Portuguese woman started thinking how she had never understood or related to her father. Her only feeling for her father was fear. A Portuguese and a Chilean woman described similar experiences with their fathers. The first Portuguese woman was so overwhelmed that she cried.

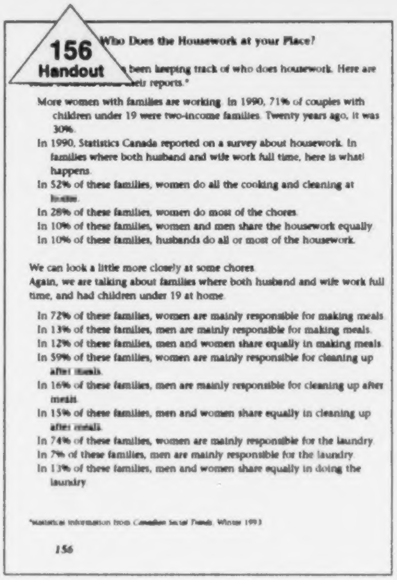
A male learner did not understand why a man would want to stay at home to take care of his children. He asked if the mother was sick.

A Portuguese woman had never heard of or seen men doing grocery shopping. Even though this is not done in her country, she seemed to be quite supportive of the idea.

A woman shared with the other learners her aspiration to become a mechanic when she was in her country. She repaired cars with her father, but nobody would take her seriously. In response, a male learner in the group said that it is indeed a dirty job. The woman retorted, "Who cares?"

3. Reading: "Who Does the Housework at Your Place?"

➤ Read and discuss the statistics from the article (page 156). Where in these figures does each learner fit?



156
Handout

Who Does the Housework at your Place?

been keeping track of who does housework. Here are their reports.*

More women with families are working. In 1990, 71% of couples with children under 19 were two-income families. Twenty years ago, it was 30%.

In 1990, Statistics Canada reported on a survey about housework. In families where both husband and wife work full time, here is what happens.

In 52% of these families, women do all the cooking and cleaning at home.

In 28% of these families, women do most of the chores.

In 10% of these families, women and men share the housework equally.

In 10% of these families, husbands do all or most of the housework.

We can look a little more closely at some chores.
Again, we are talking about families where both husband and wife work full time, and had children under 19 at home.

In 72% of these families, women are mainly responsible for making meals.

In 13% of these families, men are mainly responsible for making meals.

In 12% of these families, men and women share equally in making meals.

In 59% of these families, women are mainly responsible for cleaning up after meals.

In 16% of these families, men are mainly responsible for cleaning up after meals.

In 15% of these families, men and women share equally in cleaning up after meals.

In 74% of these families, women are mainly responsible for the laundry.

In 7% of these families, men are mainly responsible for the laundry.

In 13% of these families, men and women share equally in doing the laundry.

*Statistical information from Canadian Social Trends, Winter 1993

156

➤ Ask learners to make four bar or circle graphs showing how housework gets done in families where two parents work. Titles for the graphs might be:

- Who does the housework?
- Who makes the meals?
- Who cleans up after meals?
- Who does the laundry?

Notice that the percentages in each case do not add up to 100 %. Learners will have to put an "Other" category on their graphs. There is room for some interesting speculation there.

➤ Ask learners to write or make a drawing about some of the discussion questions from the guided discussion, above, or on these topics:

- Who does the housework at home?
- What are the usual roles of a husband and a wife in your culture?
- Have you rebelled against those roles or stuck to them? How?
- Are these responsibilities similar to or different from those of other couples in Canada?

Depending on the skills of learners, I ask them to write their own stories, or I use a language experience approach with the group or with individuals. When learners draw and present their drawings to the class, there is lots of opportunity to practise speaking and listening.

C. Controversy

1. Agreeing and disagreeing

Review or teach vocabulary we use in agreeing and disagreeing (pages 157 – 158). Then present each of the following proverbs or popular sayings, one at a time. Read the statement to make sure that everyone understands it, then do a round where each learner responds, using phrases from the vocabulary presented.

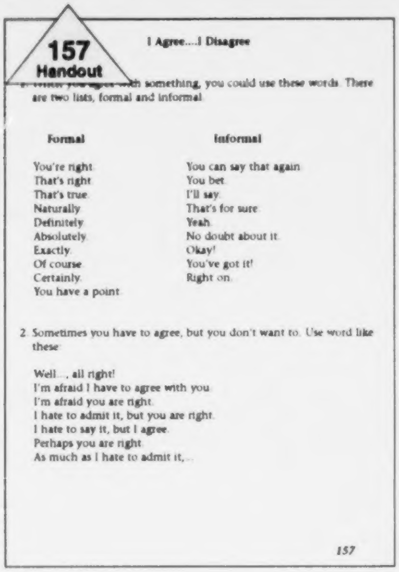
- Women with young children should not work outside the home.
- Men do not belong in the kitchen.
- Men should be responsible for the main income of the family.
- Mothers with young children should not work.
- Both women and men should do housework and cooking.
- A woman's work is never done.
- Men must earn more than women although equality is the law.
- Men and women talk differently.
- Women always have the last word.
- Girls are sugar and spice and everything nice.
- Boys are snakes and snails and puppy dogs' tails.
- Silence is consent.

2. Debate

➤ Pick one of the statements from the preceding activity for further discussion and ask learners to make a formal presentation. Each learner prepares a statement in which he or she takes a stand, either agreeing or disagreeing, and explains why. Then learners take turns presenting their statements.

➤ After the presentations or discussions, discuss the following questions:

- How did you find the discussion or the presentations?
- Was it easy to take a stand? Why or why not?
- What does that say about our inclination to follow



157
Handout

I Agree....I Disagree

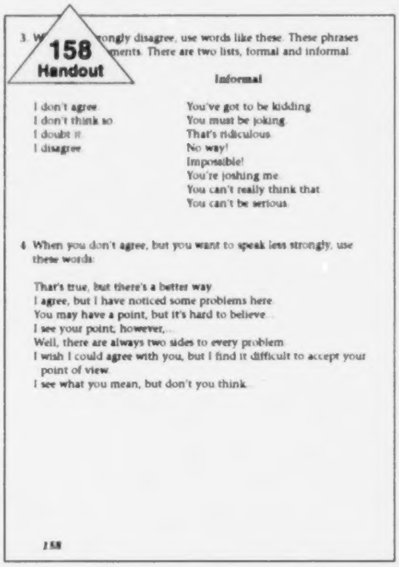
something, you could use these words. There are two lists, formal and informal.

Formal	Informal
You're right.	You can say that again.
That's right.	You bet.
That's true.	I'll say.
Naturally.	That's for sure.
Definitely.	Yeah.
Absolutely.	No doubt about it.
Exactly.	Okay!
Of course.	You've got it!
Certainly.	Right on.
You have a point.	

2. Sometimes you have to agree, but you don't want to. Use word like these:

Well..., all right!
I'm afraid I have to agree with you.
I'm afraid you are right.
I hate to admit it, but you are right.
I hate to say it, but I agree.
Perhaps you are right.
As much as I hate to admit it,...

157



158
Handout

3. W ongly disagree, use words like these. These phrases ments. There are two lists, formal and informal.

	Informal
I don't agree.	You've got to be kidding.
I don't think so.	You must be joking.
I doubt it.	That's ridiculous.
I disagree.	No way!
	Impossible!
	You're joshing me.
	You can't really think that.
	You can't be serious.

4. When you don't agree, but you want to speak less strongly, use these words:

That's true, but there's a better way.
I agree, but I have noticed some problems here.
You may have a point, but it's hard to believe...
I see your point, however,...
Well, there are always two sides to every problem.
I wish I could agree with you, but I find it difficult to accept your point of view.
I see what you mean, but don't you think...

158

If formal presentations aren't suitable for your learners, substitute an informal discussion after the round.

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I learned these activities from Sigrid Anderson. A variation is Gut Reactions (i.e., first thoughts, feelings, ideas, impressions). Stress the fact that you are interested in gut reactions. Emphasize that there is a time limit to their responses.

our own thoughts, rather than to listen to what others have to say?

- What influenced you (for example, your opinions, the reactions of others, facts, experience)?

The teacher demonstrates what is expected of learners by giving a statement and eliciting some gut reactions. The statements above are read and explained if necessary. Learners write down their responses, which are collected and displayed. At the end of the activity, learners talk about their responses and discuss the objective of the exercise.

D. Other Things Being Equal

The objectives of this section are to discuss the persuasiveness of stereotyping people solely on the basis of their group membership, and to become aware of our own biases.

This exercise depends on a bit of sleight of hand by the teacher. One small group discusses one learner, and the other discusses a second learner. The two profiles of the imaginary learners are identical except for their sex. The groups should not know that other groups have a different profile or how the profiles differ.

I read about this idea in *53 Interesting Ways to Promote Equal Opportunities in Education* by Vicky Lewis. The case studies should be adapted according to the group's background. This is to ensure the relevance of the situation to the majority of the learners in the group. For example, if a group consists mainly of women with children, the profiles could be about an imaginary niece and nephew, son and daughter, or sister and brother.

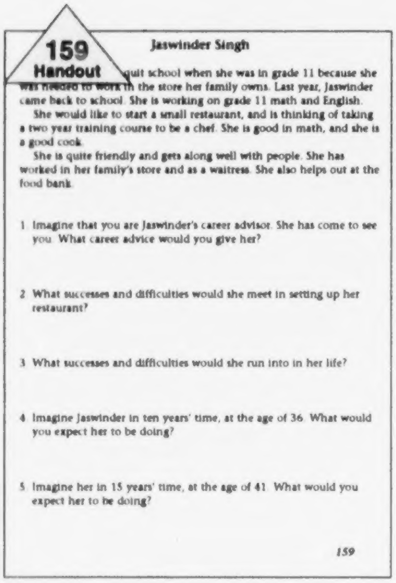
➤ In small groups, learners discuss the career options and projected futures of two imaginary learners (pages 159 – 160). Each member of the group reads the profile and shares his or her responses to the questions on the handout. The group compiles the responses into a single list.

➤ Reveal the difference between the two profiles to the group, then ask the groups to exchange their lists with a group that had a profile of the opposite sex. Some questions to consider:

- Are there any differences between the two lists? If you think so, what are they?
- Do they imply stereotyped views of men and women?

- What are the stereotyped views of men and women in your home culture? Why?
- What are the dangers of stereotyping individuals?
- In your personal life, how have you conformed to or defied stereotyped views?

To bring out our assumptions about race or abilities, write two profiles which differ in only one of those aspects.



159
Handout

Jaswinder Singh

quit school when she was in grade 11 because she was needed to work in the store her family owns. Last year, Jaswinder came back to school. She is working on grade 11 math and English.

She would like to start a small restaurant, and is thinking of taking a two year training course to be a chef. She is good in math, and she is a good cook.

She is quite friendly and gets along well with people. She has worked in her family's store and as a waitress. She also helps out at the food bank.

1 Imagine that you are Jaswinder's career advisor. She has come to see you. What career advice would you give her?

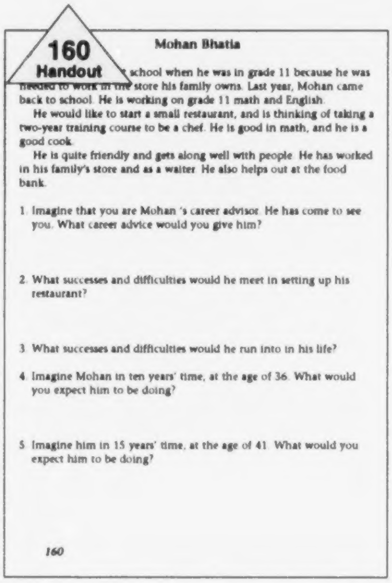
2 What successes and difficulties would she meet in setting up her restaurant?

3 What successes and difficulties would she run into in her life?

4 Imagine Jaswinder in ten years' time, at the age of 36. What would you expect her to be doing?

5 Imagine her in 15 years' time, at the age of 41. What would you expect her to be doing?

159



160
Handout

Mohan Bhatia

school when he was in grade 11 because he was needed to work in the store his family owns. Last year, Mohan came back to school. He is working on grade 11 math and English.

He would like to start a small restaurant, and is thinking of taking a two-year training course to be a chef. He is good in math, and he is a good cook.

He is quite friendly and gets along well with people. He has worked in his family's store and as a waiter. He also helps out at the food bank.

1. Imagine that you are Mohan 's career advisor. He has come to see you. What career advice would you give him?

2. What successes and difficulties would he meet in setting up his restaurant?

3. What successes and difficulties would he run into in his life?

4. Imagine Mohan in ten years' time, at the age of 36. What would you expect him to be doing?

5. Imagine him in 15 years' time, at the age of 41. What would you expect him to be doing?

160

E. The Woman (Women) I Respect

The objectives of this section are to address the issue of role modelling, to brainstorm words that describe people and to practise giving impromptu speeches.

1. Vocabulary brainstorm

➤ Write on the board: "The qualities of the woman (women) I respect most are . . ."
➤ Ask learners to brainstorm in groups.
➤ Encourage learners to think about synonyms and antonyms for each word.

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2. Presentation

➤ Encourage learners to use newly acquired vocabulary by asking them to work together or on their own to prepare for a brief presentation on the topic: "Who is (are) the woman (women) I respect most?" Some questions to consider:

- What are her qualities?
- What object(s) would you associate her with? Why?
- How has she influenced you?

Learners might want to share these objects by bringing them into class, or drawing them on the board during the presentation.

3. Writing

➤ Ask learners to write about the same questions they based their oral presentations on. This writing exercise will give learners a chance to use their new vocabulary in writing. In addition, they are encouraged to elaborate on other thoughts that might have occurred to them during the presentations. Depending on the level of the group, learners are encouraged to submit several drafts of their writing to practise their editing and proofreading skills.

I tested this idea with a group of female engineering graduate learners who felt that when they shared with each other the strengths of the women they respect, there was an overwhelming feeling of understanding. Trust was the key to this activity's success. They were interested in learning vocabulary as well as in practising their presentation and writing skills. They found the exercise enjoyable and useful. The presentations helped generate more ideas for their writing activities which consisted of three stages. Although re-writing is an unfamiliar or a dreaded task for some of them, they all appreciated the opportunity to practise writing and using their newly acquired vocabulary. We also discussed the importance of proofreading; they were either unfamiliar with it or reluctant to practise it.

F. Women and Men in the Media

The objective of this section is to raise awareness of the often biased and stereotyped portrayal of gender and culture in the media.

1. Examining the media

➤ Collect pictures of women and men and gender-associated objects from flyers, magazines, newspapers, posters, children's toy or clothing catalogues published in Canada and other countries. It might take some time to collect good pictures.

➤ Invite learners to do the same, especially from newspapers or magazines from their own cultures.

➤ Examine and discuss the collection with the learners. Some questions to consider:

- How do the women/men in the pictures look?
- Are these common, ordinary people? Why do you think this is so?
- What are these pictures trying to sell?
- Who are the advertisements for?
- Why are we looking at these pictures?
- Who is not here? Why?
- In your country, what do men and women look like on TV or in newspapers? How is it similar to or different from how they appear in the Canadian media?
- Do you like or dislike these pictures? Why?

If you decide to use pictures from learners, give them sufficient time to collect the materials. Alternatively, this activity can be deferred until learners have had a chance to look at the pictures collected by the instructor, so that they will have a better idea as to what pictures to collect. In any case, they will need to find a couple of pictures to do exercise F-3, below.

2. Writing

➤ Learners write about their feelings about this activity or some of the questions or issues that have been raised. The lists of questions from the group or class discussions can be used as a guideline.

3. Presentation

➤ Ask learners to choose a picture or two of women and men, preferably from newspapers or magazines from their culture. Ask them to make a presentation to the class about the pictures. Some questions to consider:

- Why did you choose this picture?
- What do you like or dislike about it?
- How is it similar or different from the pictures we looked at?

G. Poem-Painting-Poem

The purpose of this section is to encourage learners to express their feelings by drawing or painting after reading poetry.

I learned the ideas in this section from Suzanne Molitor at the TESL 7 Ontario Conference in January 1994.

You will find poems in other chapters of this book; other good sources are *The Other Voice: 20th Century Women's Poetry in Translation*; and *Going for Coffee* by Tom Wayman. (See Resources, page 151.)

2. Reading poems

➤ Select a few poems from different cultures about women's issues. Divide learners into small groups, and ask each group to choose a poem.

➤ Ask each group to read the chosen poem. A discussion about the poem might be necessary depending on the level of the group. New words, especially those that describe feelings, should be introduced during the discussion.

3. Painting

➤ Ask each group to draw or paint one picture to illustrate the poem, or to make a collage from magazine pictures.

➤ Share the art the groups produce.

4. Writing a poem

➤ Ask learners to choose one of the pictures created by the groups, and write a seven line poem about it, based on their telephone numbers. Ask them to write the telephone number vertically, as shown below. The number of words on each line is specified by the number on the left. If there is a "0" in the telephone number the learner has the choice of leaving the line blank, or choosing any number of words for that line.

9 ____
5 ____
3 ____
2 ____
7 ____
0 ____
1 ____

There is no need for rhyming. Lines can consist of individual words, phrases or sentences.

➤ Learners share their work and proofread each other's poems.

➤ Copy the poems and display them in the classroom.

H. Proverbs

The objectives of this section are to encourage learners to exchange proverbs, to examine proverbs about women and men from many parts of the world, and to discuss discrimination, stereotypes and double standards.

To prepare for this activity, collect proverbs about men, women and marriage. Select some proverbs, perhaps a maximum of 20. Divide each proverb into two halves and prepare two sets of flash cards, each a different colour. Use flash cards of one colour to write the beginnings of the proverbs, and cards of the other colour to write the endings. For example, "If a man tells his secrets to his wife . . ." (first half) " she will bring him into the way of Satan" (second half). (African Kanuri)

The proverbs are intended to raise our awareness about how women have been portrayed in different cultures. Even though the sayings presented here are mostly biased or negative, this activity by no means condones them. Therefore, it would be advisable for teachers to make this point clear to the learners throughout the activity.

1. Completing a proverb

➤ Teacher demonstrates the activity by selecting a card (half of a proverb) and asking learners to make up a beginning or an ending for the proverb.

➤ Learners select two to three cards and complete the

Here are some responses from my learners; the first half of the proverb, shown in bold type, is followed by a list of learners' responses. The second half of the original proverb, also shown in bold type, is in parentheses.

- **A woman's work** is . . . hard; easy; terrible; exhausting; **(never done.)** English
- **Women always have** . . . to have beautiful clothes; a dream; better patience; headaches; **(the last word.)** English
- **To educate a woman is** . . . a stupid thing; a difficult thing; time consuming; necessary; important; **(like placing a knife in the hands of a monkey.)** Hindi
- **He who trusts a woman** . . . is a gentleman; is stupid; cannot do business; **(and leads an ass will never be free from plague.)** French
- **A woman never** . . . trusts a man; complains; gives up her pursuits; stops talking about clothes and children; **(brings a man into the right way.)** African Kanuri

* * *

The male learners were eager to suggest ways of completing the proverbs. The female learners were reticent. I hope that by talking about these proverbs, learners will question beliefs such as "To educate a woman is a stupid thing." Two male learners gave me these proverbs from their countries: "There are thousands of mothers but one wife," (Europe) and "If you take a bad woman, you will have a big headache." (Central America)

proverbs. Remind learners that they only have half of a proverb. A capital letter starts the first half and a small letter starts the second half of the proverb.

➤ Learners share their completed proverbs and suggest other ways of completing the proverbs.

➤ Show learners the original endings of the proverbs.

2. Matching proverbs

➤ Pass out half a proverb to each learner. Make sure that matching pairs of flash cards are circulated. Learners walk around searching for the learner who has the other half of the proverb.

➤ Learners might not know these proverbs initially. As a result, they might match proverbs randomly. Teachers should allow them to explain why they matched them as they did. At the end of the discussion, show learners the original proverbs.

➤ Ask learners to group the completed proverbs according to grammatical structure, and use them to review or teach particular points of grammar. For example:

- Conditional structure:
  If you are faithful to your wife, you will have a healthy body. (Yiddish)
  If you marry a beautiful woman, you marry trouble. (African)
  If a woman speaks two words, take one and leave the other. (African)
- Conjunctions:
  Woman is a torment, but she is worth buying with your life. (Iranian)
  When the wife wears the pants, the husband washes the floor. (Yiddish)
  Though a beautiful woman does not say any thing, she cannot be hidden. (Japanese)

➤ Match proverbs about men and women, and compare them. For example,

- A drunken man may soon be made to dance. (Danish)
- A drunken woman is lost to shame. (Irish)
- A small man with education is of use to the state; of what use is a tall man who knows nothing? (Chinese)
- A small woman can also have a big mouth. (Yiddish)

3. More matching (review)

➤ Place the cards containing halves of proverbs on a table. Each learner takes a turn to match them. A person who succeeds in matching a pair of proverbs takes another turn. Otherwise, it is the next learner's turn. The winner is the learner with the most pairs of completed proverbs.

➤ Here are some additional proverbs that teachers could use for the activities in this section:

- The fewer women, the less trouble. (Polish)
- Every woman would rather be handsome than good. (German)
- In books there are women who appear as jewels. (Chinese)
- Women always speak the truth, but not the whole truth. (Italian)
- A thousand men may live together in harmony, whereas two women are unable to do so although they be sisters. (Tamil)
- The righteous woman has only one husband. (Vietnamese)
- A good woman is worth, if she were sold, the fairest crown that is made of purest gold. (English)
- Everything goes to loose ends where there is no woman. (American)
- Lazy and silly women marry well. (Greek)
- Women and glass are always in danger. (Portuguese)
- If a woman is cold, it is her husband's fault. (Russian)
- Two old women and a goose make a market. (Slovakian)
- The man thinks he knows, but the woman knows better. (Hindustani)
- A man without a wife is a man without thoughts. (Finnish)

All proverbs to this point in the chapter are found in *The Prentice-Hall Encyclopedia of World Proverbs: A Treasury of Wit and Wisdom through the Ages,* by Wolfgang Mieder.

➤ As a contrast to the traditional proverbs, you might want to use some quotations from modern women. A good source for such quotations is *An Uncommon Scold,* compiled and arranged by Abby Adams.

- Plain women know more about men than beautiful ones do. (Katharine Hepburn)
- The more you love someone the more he wants

from you and the less you have to give since you have already given him your love. (Nikki Giovanni)

- Marriage is a lottery in which men stake their liberty and women their happiness. (Virginie Des Rieux)
- Getting along with men is not what's truly important. The vital knowledge is how to get along with a man. One man. (Phyllis McGinley)
- When men reach their sixties and retire, they go to pieces. Women go right on cooking. (Gail Sheehy)
- Women speak because they wish to speak, whereas a man speaks only when driven to speak by something outside himself – like, for instance, he can't find any clean socks. (Jean Kerr)
- A man who is honest with himself wants a woman to be soft and feminine, careful of what she's saying and talk like a man. (Ann-Margret)
- A woman needs know but one man well, in order to understand all men; whereas a man may know all women and understand not one of them. (Helen Rowland)
- No one can make you feel inferior without your consent. (Eleanor Roosevelt)
- The loneliest woman in the world is the one without a close woman friend. (Toni Morrison)
- A happy woman has no cares at all; a cheerful woman has cares but doesn't let them get her down. (Beverly Sills)

4. Guided discussion and debriefing

➤ Some questions to consider after the activities with proverbs.

- Do you have similar or opposite sayings in your language?
- Are there other related proverbs that you have heard of?
- How are women, men and marriage portrayed?
- What do you think of these portrayals?
- Which ones do you agree or disagree with? Why?
- Do these sayings affect the way women and men are treated?

- Are these portrayals fair? Why or why not?
- How are men and women perceived?

5. Re-writing some proverbs.

➤ Create positive sayings about women from the negative ones.

6. Writing

➤ Some topics:
  - Proverbs My Family Uses
  - New Proverbs for New Women

Resources

(See the Bibliography for complete listings.)

Adams, Abby. *An Uncommon Scold*
Lewis, Vicky and Sue Habeshaw. *53 Interesting Ways to Promote Equal Opportunities in Education*
Mieder, Wolfgang. *The Prentice-Hall Encyclopedia of World Proverbs: A Treasury of Wit and Wisdom through the Ages*
Wayman, Tom. *Going for Coffee, Poetry on the Job*
The Other Voice: 20th Century Women's Poetry in Translation

Names for Men and Women

Here are some common Chinese and Korean names for men and women. The meanings of the names are given in English.

Chinese names		Korean names	
For men	**For women**	**For men**	**For women**
country	fragrance	thousand stone[1]	heroine
army, military	flower	million stone	child[4]
accomplished	beauty	stone gold[2]	terminate[5]
people	elegant	dog dung[3]	
strength	brilliant	big pine tree	
mountain	heroine		
wisdom	swallow		
	jasmine		
	silk		
	sister		

1. A unit of measurement for weighing rice.
2. A name given to a male slave. It means hardiness.
3. A nickname given to a boy. It is a traditional belief that a boy has to be given an ugly nickname. Otherwise, monsters would take him away from the family. This is similar to tales about the bogeyman.
4. During the Japanese colonization of Korea, Korean women had to change their names by adopting Japanese names, many of which consist of the common character "child/children." Incidentally, the Chinese character for "child/children" also means a male child.
5. The character "to terminate", which implies halting the birth of baby girls, is not used nowadays in Korea. In older generations, families would use "terminate" as one of the characters for a girl's name, clearly indicating the traditional family's traditional preference for a boy.

The Problem with Last Names

Customs are changing when it comes to last names. In Canada, a woman used to take her husband's name automatically when they married. If her maiden name was Marie McDonald and she married Bart Simmons, she became Marie Simmons. On formal occasions, she was Mrs. Bart Simmons. And all of their children had "Simmons" as a last name.

Since the 1970s there has been a rapid change. Now many women keep their maiden name when they marry. Why? They don't want to disappear into their husband's identity. They want to keep their own identity, even after they are married. They want to keep their birth names, just as men do. Also, many women have careers and run businesses before they get married. A change in name might interrupt their careers.

What happens when these couples have children? Some people say a boy should get his father's name and a girl should get her mother's name. Others say that a boy should get his mother's name and a girl her father's. Sometimes the two people combine the last names. The children would be called "McDonald-Simmons" or "Simmons-McDonald." This custom was traditional in Spain.

Occasionally, both men and women change their name when they get married, usually by combining both their names. In the example we have been using, the two would become Bart McDonald-Simmons and Marie McDonald-Simmons. It doesn't happen often however, because not many men are interested in changing their names.

Some people say, "Oh, what's all the fuss about? It's not important." An example may show how important it is. Josh Elias marries Nancy Brooks. He is now called Mr. Nancy Brooks, and his children are called Nancy Brooks, Jr., Samuel Brooks and Marilyn Brooks. Is Josh happy with this arrangement? Or does he think it is ridiculous?

Stay-at-home Dad

Glenn Craine, 38, is not a typical husband. He cooks, does laundry, changes diapers and more.

Craine and his wife Mary-Liz have three children: Patrick, 7, Beth, 5, and baby Katie.

When Katie was born, Craine took a parental leave. He took time off work to take care of the kids.

Craine's co-workers joked about it. "They thought it was pretty funny I was taking time off to look after a baby," he said.

But Craine enjoyed his role as stay-at-home dad. He thinks more fathers should try it.

– Ian McAlpine

Parental leave
Some employers allow new fathers to take a parental leave (also called "paternity leave"). The amount of time off depends on the employer. New fathers or mothers on parental leave can get unemployment insurance benefits for up to 10 weeks.

Adapted from *The Kingston Whig Standard*, PO Box 2300, Kingston, Ont. K7L 4Z7, page 37 of the June 19, 1993 issue. Used by permission.

Stay-at-home Dad – Questions

Answer these questions about the story:

1. What does Mary-Liz's husband do?
2. How old is he?
3. How many children do they have?
4. What does parental leave mean?
5. What did Craine's co-workers think about parental leave?
6. What did Craine think about staying at home?
7. How long is parental leave?
8. Can someone on parental leave receive unemployment insurance? For how long?

You won't find the answers to these questions in the story. You will have to say what you think in each case.

1. How did Mary Liz feel when her husband took parental leave?
2. How did Patrick, Beth and Katie feel about their stay-at-home dad?
3. What kind of jobs do Mary-Liz and Glenn Craine have?
4. Do you think a husband should take parental leave? Why or why not?
5. Are role reversals common in your culture?
6. What are the current rules about getting unemployment insurance for parental leave?

Who Does the Housework at Your Place?

Statistics Canada keeps track of who does housework. Here are some statistics from their reports:*

More women with families are working. In 1990, 71% of couples with children under 19 were two-income families. Twenty years ago, it was 30%.

In 1990, Statistics Canada reported on a survey about housework. In families where both husband and wife work full time, here is what happens:

In 52% of these families, women do all the cooking and cleaning at home.

In 28% of these families, women do most of the chores.

In 10% of these families, women and men share the housework equally.

In 10% of these families, husbands do all or most of the housework.

We can look a little more closely at some chores.
Again, we are talking about families where both husband and wife work full time, and had children under 19 at home:

In 72% of these families, women are mainly responsible for making meals.

In 13% of these families, men are mainly responsible for making meals.

In 12% of these families, men and women share equally in making meals.

In 59% of these families, women are mainly responsible for cleaning up after meals.

In 16% of these families, men are mainly responsible for cleaning up after meals.

In 15% of these families, men and women share equally in cleaning up after meals.

In 74% of these families, women are mainly responsible for the laundry.

In 7% of these families, men are mainly responsible for the laundry.

In 13% of these families, men and women share equally in doing the laundry.

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*Statistical information from *Canadian Social Trends*, Winter 1993.

I Agree . . . I Disagree

1. When you agree with something, you could use these words. There are two lists, formal and informal.

Formal

You're right.
That's right.
That's true.
Naturally.
Definitely.
Absolutely.
Exactly.
Of course.
Certainly.
You have a point.

Informal

You can say that again.
You bet.
I'll say.
That's for sure.
Yeah.
No doubt about it.
Okay!
You've got it!
Right on.

2. Sometimes you have to agree, but you don't want to. Use word like these:

Well . . . all right!
I'm afraid I have to agree with you.
I'm afraid you are right.
I hate to admit it, but you are right.
I hate to say it, but I agree.
Perhaps you are right.
As much as I hate to admit it . . .

3. When you strongly disagree, use words like these. These phrases are strong statements. There are two lists, formal and informal.

Formal

I don't agree.
I don't think so.
I doubt it.
I disagree.

Informal

You've got to be kidding
You must be joking.
That's ridiculous.
No way!
Impossible!
You're joshing me.
You can't really think that.
You can't be serious.

4. When you don't agree, but you want to speak less strongly, use these words:

That's true, but there's a better way.
I agree, but I have noticed some problems here.
You may have a point, but it's hard to believe . . .
I see your point; however . . .
Well, there are always two sides to every problem.
I wish I could agree with you, but I find it difficult to accept your point of view.
I see what you mean, but don't you think . . .

Jaswinder Singh

Jaswinder is 26. She quit school when she was in grade 11 because she was needed to work in the store her family owns. Last year, Jaswinder came back to school. She is working on grade 11 math and English.

She would like to start a small restaurant, and is thinking of taking a two-year training course to be a chef. She is good in math, and she is a good cook.

She is quite friendly and gets along well with people. She has worked in her family's store and as a waitress. She also helps out at the food bank.

1. Imagine that you are Jaswinder's career advisor. She has come to see you. What career advice would you give her?

2. What successes and difficulties would she meet in setting up her restaurant?

3. What successes and difficulties would she run into in her life?

4. Imagine Jaswinder in ten years' time, at the age of 36. What would you expect her to be doing?

5. Imagine her in 15 years' time, at the age of 41. What would you expect her to be doing?

Mohan Bhatia

Mohan is 26. He quit school when he was in grade 11 because he was needed to work in the store his family owns. Last year, Mohan came back to school. He is working on grade 11 math and English.

He would like to start a small restaurant, and is thinking of taking a two-year training course to be a chef. He is good in math, and he is a good cook.

He is quite friendly and gets along well with people. He has worked in his family's store and as a waiter. He also helps out at the food bank.

1. Imagine that you are Mohan's career advisor. He has come to see you. What career advice would you give him?

2. What successes and difficulties would he meet in setting up his restaurant?

3. What successes and difficulties would he run into in his life?

4. Imagine Mohan in ten years' time, at the age of 36. What would you expect him to be doing?

5. Imagine him in 15 years' time, at the age of 41. What would you expect him to be doing?

6. Role Models

by *Evelyn Battell*

photo: Dorothy Elias

I HAVE BEEN an Adult Basic Education instructor for 20 years in Alberta and B.C. I have always loved writing curriculum and have written for students at many levels, in many subjects and many learning situations. Each time, the first time we use the new material is a revelation in the richness of people's lives and ways of understanding and learning. This project has been rich, not only because of the desperate need for material which celebrates the strength of the women in our classes, but because of the thrill of working with instructors from such varied backgrounds, all of whom have a passion for this work and for the women we teach.

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to consider role models. Who are they, and what purpose do they serve? When we are young we might have said, "I want to be just like her." As adults we no longer feel so open to possibilities. We are pretty much fully formed and we may feel trapped by our circumstances. But we are influenced, guided and inspired by women around us and by those we read about or see in the media.

In this chapter I have used female pronouns wherever possible. When you are posting lists or posing questions, you can easily change the pronouns to "she/he" or "her or him" as necessary. But try using all female pronouns sometimes in gender-mixed classes and you may discover there is no negative reaction. The positive effect for the women will be very subtle.

You can also suggest both women and men students try to think of female role models – if they can't think of a woman, then ask them to do the activity with a male role model in mind. By suggesting it, however, you legitimate women's choices of women as role models.

Who are role models for us and our students? Here are some suggestions:

- A woman who acts out a quality you admire. She is kind, honest, generous, brave or dignified, especially in difficult times.
- A woman who is doing, or did, something you want to do: a job or skill or hobby or community work. Sometimes others don't think she should do this work.
- A woman who is active in the community and good for the community. Her work might make things that used to be forbidden possible for other women.
- A woman who has conquered something like alcohol or drug abuse, or illness.

- A woman who fights for what she believes in – whether or not we agree with her.
- A woman who has followed her dream.

For women, being admired or reviled are often opposite sides of the same coin. Women who are caring wives and mothers are much admired and emulated. On the other hand, if unmarried women choose to stay at home with their children rather than hold a series of low-status, poorly paid, temporary jobs, they are considered welfare bums.

Although it is true that women are no longer restricted to the private sphere, they are not welcome to challenge the long-standing rules of the public sphere. They may be applauded for being "Superwoman," but they shouldn't complain about lack of day care facilities.

Most of the women presented in this chapter took a personal struggle out into the public arena. Because they went public, they became role models for many people. Yet the very act of going public left them open to criticism from the public; some who might have supported their wishes privately could not abide their making a public stand. So for some of us they have become role models, and for others of us they are "acting inappropriately."

All of this is to say, that, as we look for role models, we need to understand why we want to be like these women and why others may not approve of them. We also need to ask who approves? Who doesn't? In answering these questions we will clarify some of our values.

This chapter looks at some women role models, and goes on to invite students to look at themselves as role models for others. Your students may find it quite a leap to go from the personal story of "Kirsten" to the more explicitly political stories of Sheila Gilhooly, Sue Rodriguez and Phyllis Chelsea. For this reason, you may want to look at the material about Kate Braid, a trades woman, who is featured in the chapter "Women and Work," after you have done Section C of this chapter, "Courageous Spirits."

A. Defining Role Models

1. Guided discussion

➤ Ask the students to tell about women they like and admire. Some questions to consider:

- Why do you like and admire them?
- How do these women affect or influence you?
- Do you try to be like them in any way?
- Do these women have any common qualities or similarities?

➤ Make a list of the reasons students give.
➤ Talk a bit about role models.

- What does the term mean?
- Does it just mean cover girls or women who model clothes?
- A model shows how something is done or how it looks. A role is the part you play. What are some more ways to define the term?

2. Categorizing

➤ Take six large sheets of paper, and on each write one of the examples given in the bulleted list in the introduction to this chapter.

➤ Put the sheets up around the room.

➤ Read the sheets with the group, discussing what the categories mean, if necessary. You might add a few words to each so you will remember what you talked about.

➤ Keep these sheets. You will need to refer to them several times, later in the chapter.

➤ Divide students into small groups, and ask them to follow these steps:

- Tell your group about some woman you admire. Tell why.
- Look at the categories on the flip chart sheets around the room, and decide if your woman fits any of these categories. If so, put the name on the right list.

- If the woman does not fit anywhere, try to explain why to the group. Can you create another category to include the woman? If so, make a flip chart sheet and put it up. Someone else in another group may want to add some examples.
- Tell about as many role models as you like. Think back to when you were younger. Who were your role models then?

180 Handout

Role Models from the Past

Interview Questions

Ask your partner about role models from the past. You could use some of these questions to get started. When you listen to your partner's answers, you might want to ask some questions that aren't on this page.

1 Remember when you were younger. Who was your role model?

2 Why did you look up to that person?

3 Did you change the way you acted to be more like that person?

4 Did you change the way you dressed?

5 Did you change the way you talked?

6 Did you change the way you spent your time?

7 Did you think differently about yourself?

8 Were these changes good? Did they make you happier, healthier, more successful?

9 Were the changes bad? Did they make you miserable? Unhealthy?

10 Have you changed your minds about any of the role models you had when you were younger?

180

3. Pair interview

➤ Divide the students into pairs to talk about the effect role models had on them when they were younger. You may want to hand out the list of questions (page 180) for them to use as a guide.

4. Guided discussion

➤ Some questions to consider:
- What would happen if you chose a wealthy white actress as your role model, or a young sports star?
- What happens to self-esteem when you try to be like a role model who is very, very different from you?

5. Writing

➤ Ask students to write about one of the women they admire. Share the writing with the class in your usual manner or make a collection, perhaps a book.

➤ Students might choose to bring something that makes them think of their role models. It could be something the women owned, a picture, something she made, or something that represents her or her world. Students could make oral presentations to the class or write about the objects and read the writing to the class.

B. Describing Personal Qualities

1. Guided discussion

➤ Discuss the qualities you value. Some questions to consider:

- What would you like people to report about you now or when you are gone?
- What qualities are important to teach to children?

➤ Save this list; you will need to refer to it again later in the chapter.

2. Small group discussion

➤ Ask students, in small groups, to consider themselves as role models. Some questions to consider:

- Who are you a role model for? Children, brothers and sisters, community, other students?
- What qualities do they see in you? (Refer to the list just made, and add to it if necessary.)
- How do you model these characteristics? Can you describe what you do that shows patience or honesty, for example. Try to be really specific about what you do.

➤ Report some of this conversation back to the large group, and/or write about it.

3. Word-search puzzles

➤ Ask each student to make a word-search puzzle, using the qualities they admire for the words in the puzzle. They should start with a grid divided into about 10 squares each way, put in their words, running in any direction, then fill in the other squares with random letters. Each student could make one and then pass it to a partner to do.

Spend some time finding the perfect words to describe these qualities. In a more advanced group this could be a dictionary or thesaurus exercise. Here is a short list if you need some to get you started: reliable, fair, kind, strong, funny, energetic, resourceful, friendly, imaginative, generous, honest, patient, cheerful, brave.

For some people this kind of self-assessment is hard to do. In mainstream Canadian culture, it is more acceptable for men than for women to "brag" about themselves; in some cultures it is simply not done. Depending on your group, you might ask people to talk about someone else in the group, so no one has to talk about themselves, or you might ask people to talk about how they try to behave in order to be a good role model for children, rather than asking them to say what they have done.

If you photocopy the puzzles, several students can do each one.

C. Courageous Spirits

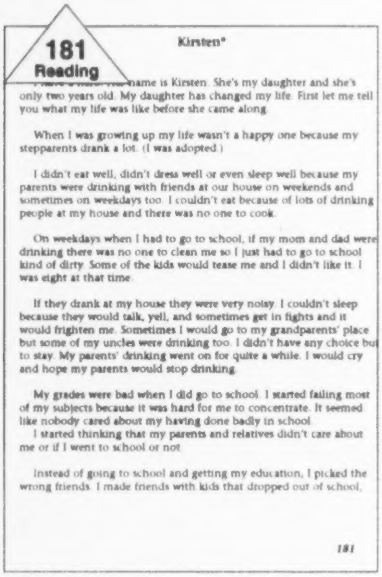
If you can, buy the book, *Courageous Spirits*, so you can learn about Trickster from First Nations people. There is also an excellent teacher's guide. You might invite a local elder in to tell you some local Trickster stories. Contact the office of a First Nation or a Native Friendship Centre in your area to find someone who would be willing to come in. Perhaps one of the students knows someone who would be an interesting guest story teller.

Later in this chapter there is a list of many other easy-to-read books that are first person accounts of women's lives. (See Resources on page 178.) A story from any of these books could be used instead of or in addition to "Kirsten."

Courageous Spirits is a collection of stories written by aboriginal children all across Canada, about their heroes. The book also has a story about Trickster who ties all the stories together. Trickster is a character who is part of many aboriginal cultures; the elders have called him or her many things, including Raven, Coyote, Wesakejac, Flint, Nanabozo, and Glooscap. He/She/It helps teach cultural values and history.

2. Reading: "Kirsten"

➤ Start with a prediction exercise. Read the first paragraph and discuss what students think is going to happen in this story. Make a few notes so you can compare your predictions with the story after you read it.
➤ Read the story (pages 181 – 183). You might stop after paragraph 12 to check the facts. At this point, people in the class might want to tell stories that are like Debbie's, either their own stories or those of someone they know.
➤ Compare your predictions with what really happened.



Kirsten*

name is Kirsten. She's my daughter and she's only two years old. My daughter has changed my life. First let me tell you what my life was like before she came along.

When I was growing up my life wasn't a happy one because my stepparents drank a lot. (I was adopted.)

I didn't eat well, didn't dress well or even sleep well because my parents were drinking with friends at our house on weekends and sometimes on weekdays too. I couldn't eat because of lots of drinking people at my house and there was no one to cook.

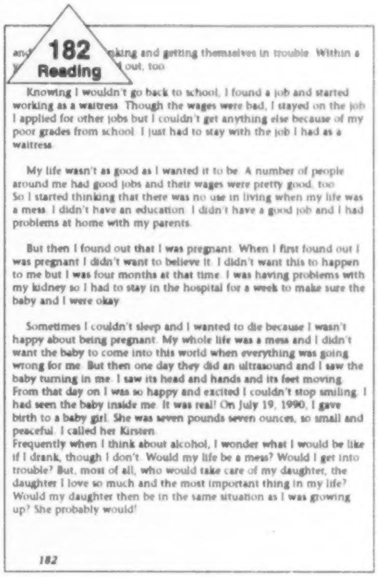
On weekdays when I had to go to school, if my mom and dad were drinking there was no one to clean me so I just had to go to school kind of dirty. Some of the kids would tease me and I didn't like it. I was eight at that time.

If they drank at my house they were very noisy. I couldn't sleep because they would talk, yell, and sometimes get in fights and it would frighten me. Sometimes I would go to my grandparents' place but some of my uncles were drinking too. I didn't have any choice but to stay. My parents' drinking went on for quite a while. I would cry and hope my parents would stop drinking.

My grades were bad when I did go to school. I started failing most of my subjects because it was hard for me to concentrate. It seemed like nobody cared about my having done badly in school.
I started thinking that my parents and relatives didn't care about me or if I went to school or not.

Instead of going to school and getting my education, I picked the wrong friends. I made friends with kids that dropped out of school,

181



king and getting themselves in trouble. Within a out, too.

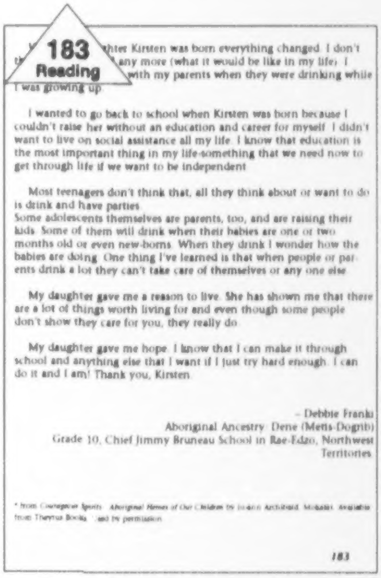
Knowing I wouldn't go back to school, I found a job and started working as a waitress. Though the wages were bad, I stayed on the job. I applied for other jobs but I couldn't get anything else because of my poor grades from school. I just had to stay with the job I had as a waitress.

My life wasn't as good as I wanted it to be. A number of people around me had good jobs and their wages were pretty good, too.
So I started thinking that there was no use in living when my life was a mess. I didn't have an education. I didn't have a good job and I had problems at home with my parents.

But then I found out that I was pregnant. When I first found out I was pregnant I didn't want to believe it. I didn't want this to happen to me but I was four months at that time. I was having problems with my kidney so I had to stay in the hospital for a week to make sure the baby and I were okay.

Sometimes I couldn't sleep and I wanted to die because I wasn't happy about being pregnant. My whole life was a mess and I didn't want the baby to come into this world when everything was going wrong for me. But then one day they did an ultrasound and I saw the baby turning in me. I saw its head and hands and its feet moving. From that day on I was so happy and excited I couldn't stop smiling. I had seen the baby inside me. It was real! On July 19, 1990, I gave birth to a baby girl. She was seven pounds seven ounces, so small and peaceful. I called her Kirsten.
Frequently when I think about alcohol, I wonder what I would be like if I drank, though I don't. Would my life be a mess? Would I get into trouble? But, most of all, who would take care of my daughter, the daughter I love so much and the most important thing in my life? Would my daughter then be in the same situation as I was growing up? She probably would!

182



hter Kirsten was born everything changed. I don't any more (what it would be like in my life). I with my parents when they were drinking while I was growing up.

I wanted to go back to school when Kirsten was born because I couldn't raise her without an education and career for myself. I didn't want to live on social assistance all my life. I know that education is the most important thing in my life-something that we need now to get through life if we want to be independent.

Most teenagers don't think that, all they think about or want to do is drink and have parties.
Some adolescents themselves are parents, too, and are raising their kids. Some of them will drink when their babies are one or two months old or even new-borns. When they drink I wonder how the babies are doing. One thing I've learned is that when people or parents drink a lot they can't take care of themselves or any one else.

My daughter gave me a reason to live. She has shown me that there are a lot of things worth living for and even though some people don't show they care for you, they really do.

My daughter gave me hope. I know that I can make it through school and anything else that I want if I just try hard enough. I can do it and I am! Thank you, Kirsten.

– Debbie Franki
Aboriginal Ancestry: Dene (Metis-Dogrib)
Grade 10, Chief Jimmy Bruneau School in Rae-Edzo, Northwest Territories

183

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➤ Some questions to consider:
- What were the barriers Debbie had to overcome in life?
- She doesn't say much, but imagine some of the situations that would have occurred while she was changing her life-scenes with her parents, her friends, the doctors and nurses, her welfare worker, landlords, or the school.

➤ Other activities:
- As a group, write a short drama of the story and have people perform it. This can be done with full acting and props or as Readers' Theatre.
- Do a "chair talk" of one or more of these scenes. Put the names of each character on a chair at the front of the room. Whoever sits in the chair speaks *ad lib* for that person.
- Make a collage with two sides. One side shows Debbie's life before Kirsten and the other after. The collage could include such things as drawings, cut-out pictures, words, poems, small objects, stars, stickers and glitter.

I find Readers' Theatre a very useful technique when working with literacy students. It is really theatre of the voice; the script is read by the actors, and there is no moving around stage, and little or nothing in the way of props. The technique is to look down at the script, silently read a sentence, look up and "perform" it, then look down, read the next sentence silently, look up and "perform" it. Emphasis is not on reproducing the text exactly, but rather on giving the line with expression. During rehearsal, speeches can be performed around the circle, without assigning a particular character to a particular actor.

3. Discussion and writing

➤ Some questions to consider:
- What qualities enabled Debbie to turn her life around?
- Which kind(s) of role model is Debbie? That is, which sheet(s) would she fit on?
- How is Debbie like you? Do you have some of her characteristics? Have you ever been in a similar situation? What did you do? Write or tell about it.
- If this story reminds you of anyone you know, tell or write that person's story.
- Write a letter to Debbi Franki. Debbi was in Grade 10 in 1993. Someone in her school or her community will be able to find her to pass on your letters. You might put "Please Forward" on the envelope. Use your local library or government office for help with the exact address.

D. Still Sane

This is a terrifying, powerful and moving story of Sheila Gilhooly's struggle to keep her sanity during a time in her life when everyone around her said she was crazy because she was a lesbian. Years later, Sheila wrote the story, and Persimmon Blackbridge, an artist and friend, made clay body-size sculptures to go with the story. They called the resulting show "Still Sane." Later the book of the same name was published. The book has photos of the sculptures and the text; as well, there are essays and short personal accounts by other people on the subjects of lesbianism and psychiatric institutions. Three short excerpts are presented here, with some bridging material between the excerpts. Getting at least one copy of the book is a good idea. The sculptures help the reader understand the experience.

The main text of the book is very painful reading because of the emotions it brings up; this is a book to use with one student or a small group of students. When you use this book, you are dealing with homophobia and abuses in the mental health system.

In guiding this discussion there are several points to keep in mind. In any society, approximately 10% of people are homosexual. In Canada, sexual preference is protected to a certain degree under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. But it often has been, and still sometimes is, treated as a mental illness. The mental health system is sometimes used to change or punish people who are different. In your group you may have lesbians or gay men or people who have homosexuals among their families and friends.

What Sheila and Persimmon did by publishing this book was call attention to abuses in the mental health system. You may well have students who have suffered themselves or have had a friend or relative who has suffered abuses from mental health practitioners. As well, you may have students who have very positive feelings about their dealings with the mental health system. The mixture is often volatile.

1. Introduction and ground rules

➤ Before you take up the excerpt from *Still Sane*, tell the students about the material and start a discussion of their experiences. You might begin by setting some rules for the discussion. Some suggestions are:

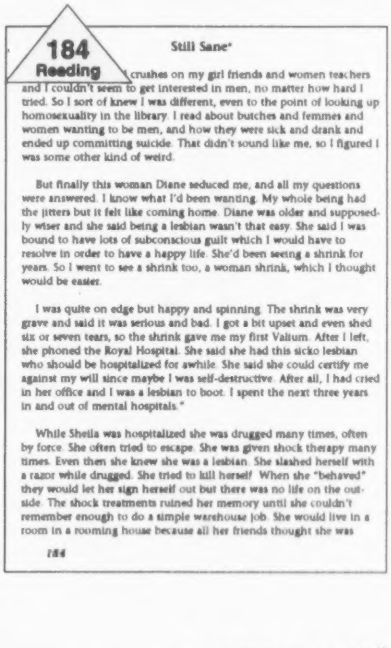
- Be careful every time you say "they." Is this really true of all of "them"? How do you know? What if someone in this room is one of "them"? Will your words hurt or silence them?
- Remember the way you like people to speak about you.
- Remember how little we know about why people are the way they are. We usually don't know what "causes" people's choices.
- Ask the group to agree, perhaps by a nod or a show of hands, that they will be careful in what they say.

➤ Now ask if any one in the room will tell about a time they thought there was something "wrong" with them. Does any one want to talk about an experience they have had or someone they know has had with either homosexuality or mental hospitals? As these stories are being told try to draw out what the person in the story may have been feeling.

If these stories lead to a discussion of shame or embarrassment, good. If not, you may have to ask more generally if anyone can talk about having to hide something about themselves, especially something that they had no control over.

After these discussions be sure the group wants to continue before starting to read the excerpt. If the discussions have been judgmental, if some have been silent, it may be better to save this work for one student or a small group of students instead of the whole group.

2. Reading: *Still Sane*



184 Reading

Still Sane*

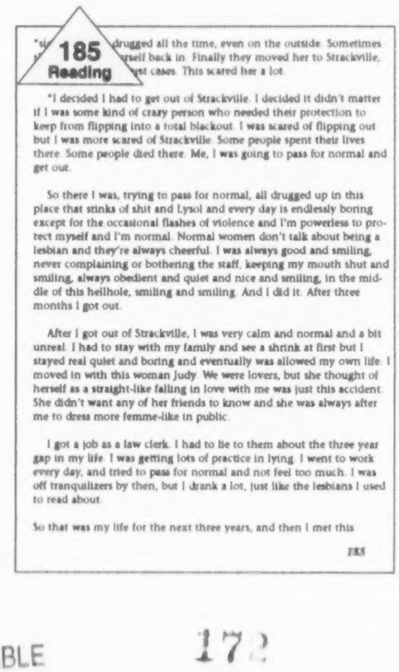
crushes on my girl friends and women teachers and I couldn't seem to get interested in men, no matter how hard I tried. So I sort of knew I was different, even to the point of looking up homosexuality in the library. I read about butches and femmes and women wanting to be men, and how they were sick and drank and ended up committing suicide. That didn't sound like me, so I figured I was some other kind of weird.

But finally this woman Diane seduced me, and all my questions were answered. I know what I'd been wanting. My whole being had the jitters but it felt like coming home. Diane was older and supposedly wiser and she said being a lesbian wasn't that easy. She said I was bound to have lots of subconscious guilt which I would have to resolve in order to have a happy life. She'd been seeing a shrink for years. So I went to see a shrink too, a woman shrink, which I thought would be easier.

I was quite on edge but happy and spinning. The shrink was very grave and said it was serious and bad. I got a bit upset and even shed six or seven tears, so the shrink gave me my first Valium. After I left, she phoned the Royal Hospital. She said she had this sicko lesbian who should be hospitalized for awhile. She said she could certify me against my will since maybe I was self-destructive. After all, I had cried in her office and I was a lesbian to boot. I spent the next three years in and out of mental hospitals."

While Sheila was hospitalized she was drugged many times, often by force. She often tried to escape. She was given shock therapy many times. Even then she knew she was a lesbian. She slashed herself with a razor while drugged. She tried to kill herself! When she "behaved" they would let her sign herself out but there was no life on the outside. The shock treatments ruined her memory until she couldn't remember enough to do a simple warehouse job. She would live in a room in a rooming house because all her friends thought she was

184



185 Reading

"si drugged all the time, even on the outside. Sometimes self back in. Finally they moved her to Strackville, cases. This scared her a lot.

"I decided I had to get out of Strackville. I decided it didn't matter if I was some kind of crazy person who needed their protection to keep from flipping into a total blackout. I was scared of flipping out but I was more scared of Strackville. Some people spent their lives there. Some people died there. Me, I was going to pass for normal and get out.

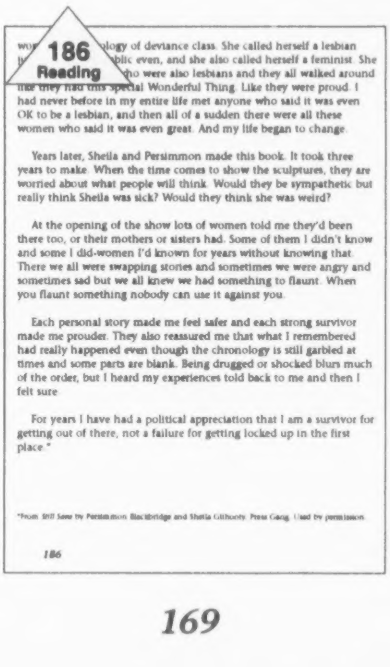
So there I was, trying to pass for normal, all drugged up in this place that stinks of shit and Lysol and every day is endlessly boring except for the occasional flashes of violence and I'm powerless to protect myself and I'm normal. Normal women don't talk about being a lesbian and they're always cheerful. I was always good and smiling, never complaining or bothering the staff, keeping my mouth shut and smiling, always obedient and quiet and nice and smiling, in the middle of this hellhole, smiling and smiling. And I did it. After three months I got out.

After I got out of Strackville, I was very calm and normal and a bit unreal. I had to stay with my family and see a shrink at first but I stayed real quiet and boring and eventually was allowed my own life. I moved in with this woman Judy. We were lovers, but she thought of herself as a straight-like falling in love with me was just this accident. She didn't want any of her friends to know and she was always after me to dress more femme-like in public.

I got a job as a law clerk. I had to lie to them about the three year gap in my life. I was getting lots of practice in lying. I went to work every day, and tried to pass for normal and not feel too much. I was off tranquilizers by then, but I drank a lot, just like the lesbians I used to read about.

So that was my life for the next three years, and then I met this

185



186 Reading

wo ology of deviance class. She called herself a lesbian blic even, and she also called herself a feminist. She ho were also lesbians and they all walked around al Wonderful Thing. Like they were proud. I had never before in my entire life met anyone who said it was even OK to be a lesbian, and then all of a sudden there were all these women who said it was even great. And my life began to change.

Years later, Sheila and Persimmon made this book. It took three years to make. When the time comes to show the sculptures, they are worried about what people will think. Would they be sympathetic but really think Sheila was sick? Would they think she was weird?

At the opening of the show lots of women told me they'd been there too, or their mothers or sisters had. Some of them I didn't know and some I did-women I'd known for years without knowing that. There we all were swapping stories and sometimes we were angry and sometimes sad but we all knew we had something to flaunt. When you flaunt something nobody can use it against you.

Each personal story made me feel safer and each strong survivor made me prouder. They also reassured me that what I remembered had really happened even though the chronology is still garbled at times and some parts are blank. Being drugged or shocked blurs much of the order, but I heard my experiences told back to me and then I felt sure.

For years I have had a political appreciation that I am a survivor for getting out of there, not a failure for getting locked up in the first place."

*From *Still Sane* by Persimmon Blackbridge and Sheila Gilhooly. Press Gang. Used by permission.

186

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➤ Read the story (pages 184 – 186) and discuss it. Some questions to consider:

- What does Sheila mean when she says, "When you flaunt something, nobody can use it against you"?
- Do you agree with her?
- What is your reaction when someone flaunts a behaviour that is usually hushed up?
- Have you ever flaunted something that people criticised you for? How did it make you feel?
- What qualities does Sheila have that allowed her to survive and to make this book? (Look back again at the list from activity B-1, above.)
- Sheila was without a role model. What difference would it have made if she had grown up knowing some lesbians?

Students who have flaunted some aspect of themselves might want to write about their experiences.

E. Sue Rodriguez

Sue Rodriguez is a very controversial figure in Canada. Throughout this group of activities it will be useful to try to figure out what Sue models for us. Whether we agree with her or not, she stands for a set of beliefs and a way of fighting for beliefs. We may be able to learn from her how to fight for our beliefs, even if we disagree with her cause.

This story will generate a lot of discussion, so much that the group may lose sight of the context, that is the Canadian legal system of the late twentieth century. Sue's options were controlled and affected by the fact that she lived in this time and place. It would be interesting to imagine what would have been possible in other countries the students know. Consider Holland, if anyone knows it, where euthanasia is legal under certain circumstances.

Uncommon Will: The Death and Life of Sue Rodriguez, by Lisa Birnie and Sue Rodriguez, is a book some students will be interested in. Large parts of it are easier to read than a newspaper, and the story is presented clearly and in an orderly fashion.

1. Previewing: "Headlines"

➤ Ask students to do the headlines exercise (page 187).

187
Handout

Headlines
Sue Rodriguez

The headlines below come from Canadian newspapers and magazines. They are all from stories about Sue Rodriguez. They tell her story in the order it happened.
What can you remember or figure out about the Sue Rodriguez case just from looking at the headlines?

Who owns my life? dying woman asks
Globe and Mail Nov. 25, 1992

Woman seeks life with dignity, B.C. court told
Globe and Mail Feb. 16, 1993

"I am getting weaker." A woman wanting legal suicide has another chance
Maclean's March 22, 1993

Death Wish: Would you choose assisted suicide?
Chatelaine July 1993

Humanist of the Year: A Portrait of Courage
Humanist in Canada Summer 1993

Dying woman hopes others helped by loss
Vancouver Sun Oct. 1, 1993

A Wrenching Decision
Canada's top court rejects assisted suicide
Maclean's Oct. 11, 1993

Rodriguez case latest controversy for Robinson, rebel M.P. with a cause
Toronto Daily Star Feb. 15, 1994

A private death ends a very public battle
Toronto Daily Star Feb. 19, 1994

Remembering hero who "moved a nation"
Vancouver Sun Feb 28, 1994

The legacy of Sue Rodriguez
Maclean's Feb. 28, 1994

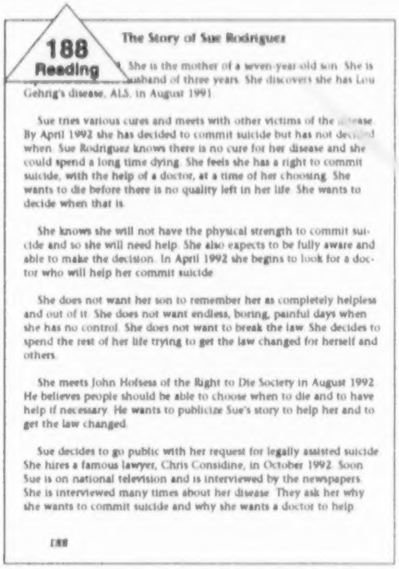
187

This exercise requires quite difficult reading. The headlines are full of words which will need to be explained and perhaps learned. After you have constructed definitions for them, make a crossword or have each student make a matching exercise of some of the words and pass them to the next student to do. If this is the first time your students have tried to write definitions, they will find it difficult. You might do a set together.

If the vocabulary is too difficult, you may choose to use only one or two headlines to introduce the story. Or you may choose to write a few of the headlines in simpler language; when the students are comfortable with them, compare them to the originals. The comparison is important if at all possible. It helps student see that they are closer to "reading" difficult material.

2. Reading: "The Story of Sue Rodriguez"

➤ Read the story with your group (pages 188 – 189).



188
Reading

The Story of Sue Rodriguez

. She is the mother of a seven-year-old son. She is usband of three years. She discovers she has Lou Gehrig's disease, ALS, in August 1991.

Sue tries various cures and meets with other victims of the disease. By April 1992 she has decided to commit suicide but has not decided when. Sue Rodriguez knows there is no cure for her disease and she could spend a long time dying. She feels she has a right to commit suicide, with the help of a doctor, at a time of her choosing. She wants to die before there is no quality left in her life. She wants to decide when that is.

She knows she will not have the physical strength to commit suicide and so she will need help. She also expects to be fully aware and able to make the decision. In April 1992 she begins to look for a doctor who will help her commit suicide.

She does not want her son to remember her as completely helpless and out of it. She does not want endless, boring, painful days when she has no control. She does not want to break the law. She decides to spend the rest of her life trying to get the law changed for herself and others.

She meets John Hofsess of the Right to Die Society in August 1992. He believes people should be able to choose when to die and to have help if necessary. He wants to publicize Sue's story to help her and to get the law changed.

Sue decides to go public with her request for legally assisted suicide. She hires a famous lawyer, Chris Considine, in October 1992. Soon Sue is on national television and is interviewed by the newspapers. She is interviewed many times about her disease. They ask her why she wants to commit suicide and why she wants a doctor to help.

188

189
Reading

r first court battle for the right to physician-assisted
C. court in January 1993. She becomes friends with
o is the lawyer of the Right to Die society and a
nt.

Hofsess has been working with Sue to publicize her case but now she is very weak, can't write anymore and can barely talk. He writes a letter to a Vancouver paper and signs her name without consulting her. He says he is sure he knows what she would like to say. Sue is furious. By doing this he proves how dangerous it is to give anyone power to act for another person. He makes the case much harder to win.

Sue goes to court three more times and loses every time. There are always some votes for and some votes against. The last decision was announced on Sept. 30, 1993.

She has some supporters. There are many people who argue against her. When her case goes to trial, many churches, some groups of handicapped people and an organisation of doctors all tell their opinions. So does her lawyer, the Right to Die Society and the Governments of Canada and B.C.

People who don't agree with her also write her letters and write about her in the newspapers. They often hurt her. They say personal things about her. They often say they don't want anybody to think they agree with her.

On February 11, 1994, Sue commits suicide at her home with morphine and sleeping pills. An unnamed doctor and Sven Robinson are present.

Sue got all of Canada talking about her case. Because of her case the Government of Canada will have to debate the issue. They may decide to make a law allowing assisted suicide.

189

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3. Timeline and review

This is a long and possibly confusing story; making a time line will keep the details in front of the class during the following discussion.

➤ Make a timeline of the main events in her story.

➤ Review the story by discussing these questions:
- What did her struggle to change the law cost her?
- Who helped her?
- How did she use the media, the government, community organizations and famous people?
- Did she succeed, even partly?
- Who opposed her?
- Were those who opposed her respectful or did they try to hurt or scare her?
- Do you think she was satisfied with the results?

These are general questions that could be used to discuss anyone who struggles to change social conditions. You might want to display them in the classroom. Use them again in the guided discussion (E-4).

4. Guided discussion

➤ Some questions to consider:
- Do you admire Sue?
- What categories of role model does Sue fit into? Which qualities did she have? (from activities A-2 and B-1)
- How are you like her?
- Can you think of any issue in your life or community that is really important – something which really needs changing?
- Can you think of a woman who tried to change something in her community? Tell her story, and use the questions about Sue Rodriguez from Section E-3 to discuss it.
- You might know someone who would come in and tell your class of a public struggle she went through. Interview her, asking some of these same questions. Someone in your class may be willing to tell of some time in their own lives when they fought for something.

5. Writing

➤ You might introduce the activity by saying that Sue shows us that how we act in our personal lives can affect what happens to our community or country. Sue decided that what she wanted was something other people should also have if they wanted it. She didn't think only of herself, and took advantage of her right to speak out about her views.

➤ Invite students, individually or in pairs, to make a list of all the rights they think we should have. A short list is started below. What other things should be on this list?

- The right to vote.
- The right to physical safety.
- The right to practise your religion.
- The right to an education.
- The right to own personal property.
- The right to enter and exit the country.

➤ Invite students to write on any of these topics:

- What rights are you being denied that are on your list?
- How might you fight for your rights?

Some "rights" are sure to come up that American citizens have, but Canadians don't, for example, the right to bear arms, or the right to a telephone call if you are arrested. There are interesting possibilities for research here into rights people have in different countries.

Some students might be interested in finding out more about federal and provincial human rights legislation, or inviting a guest speaker such as a rights activist. (There are many groups fighting for rights or advocating on behalf of their members – people with disabilities, First Nations, lesbians, gays and bisexuals, animal rights, environmentalists, fat people, short people, women, fathers, tenants and so on. Check your phone book or watch your local paper for the names of people to contact.)

F. *The Honour of All*

This NFB film (available on video) shows how one woman started the process that changed the Alkalai Lake reserve, once nicknamed "Alcohol Lake," into an alcohol-free reserve. The actors in the film are the people of Alkalai Lake, who play themselves or each other. It ends with a selection of clips from the celebration after the film was completed.

1. Introduction to the film

➤ If you have any First Nations students in your group, ask them if they know the film *The Honour of All*. If not, ask some or all of them to preview it and decide if they would like the whole class to see it.

➤ If they decide it is all right to show the film, they may want to co-present the session with you. Discuss with them what the session with the class would cover.

A colleague worked out this way of introducing the film after a negative experience the first time she used it with a class that had both First Nations and other students in it. The film opens with a long section in which conditions on the reserve are made explicit. Every adult on the reserve was a drinker, and the problems of violence and neglect are not glossed over. The first time my colleague showed it, one First Nations student walked out during the first section, and there was a lot of initial discomfort in the room. The instructor worried about what First Nations students were thinking, and many students were upset because of the stereotypes that are portrayed in the first section, since they were not yet aware of how the people on the reserve come to grips with their problems.

Since then she has asked First Nations students to watch the film together, outside of class, and decide if it will be shown in class. She has done this three or four times, and the group has always decided to show it. They usually present it proudly to the class and do a lot of extra reading and writing in connection with it.

Because of student demand, she has since extended the policy to other potentially controversial films. A film about welfare recipients, for example, will be previewed and okayed by a group of students on welfare, before being shown to the whole group.

2. Alternate introduction

If First Nations students introduce the film, there is no need for the following activity. However, discussion of First Nations peoples' lives, their life on reserves and widespread prejudice against them are important for all of us in Canada – particularly as land claims and aboriginal rights are being negotiated. If you do not have First Nations students in your class, you might want to introduce the film as follows:

➤ Do some word clusters on the blackboard. Put up the word "alcohol" with a circle around it and have people call out words that are connected to it in their minds. Write them down all around the word. Put up "poverty" and do the same. For now don't discuss the words, just brainstorm. 💔

➤ Ask if anyone knows someone they would describe as poor, or if they describe themselves that way.

➤ Now put up "reserve." Before you start having them brainstorm words for "reserve," make some space for anyone in the room who may now or in the past have lived on a reserve or have family living on a reserve. This is a sensitive word because of the prejudice and ignorance about life on reserves often found among those of us who are not First Nations people.

➤ Notice, in this cluster, how many words seem negative and or blaming.

➤ Introduce the film by letting them know that this is a film about one woman, and then a whole reserve, who got fed up with their situation and changed it through will power and working together. But it started with one woman. This reserve now runs an institute to teach others how to make major social change.

💔 Before you talk about these words, review your ground rules for being careful in general conversation.

You are trying to give people lots of room here. Just notice briefly, how many of the words feel negative. Are there any positive ones? Are there words that blame the poor for being poor, that criticize them? Comment that blaming people often makes them angry and hurt and we have to be particularly careful not to silence others in the room.

3. Film: *The Honour of All*

➤ Some questions to consider:
- The actors in the film are playing themselves. How would it feel to act out their previous way of life?
- How did Phyllis Chelsea act as a role model?
- What did her struggle cost her?
- Who helped her?

This is a powerful film and may leave people a little overcome. If your students are able writers, they might want to just write their impressions in a free write for 5 or 10 minutes following the film, before any conversation. Then someone might volunteer to read out their writing to start the conversation. On the other hand, a coffee break may seem more comfortable after the film.

- Who opposed her?
- Were those who opposed her respectful or did they try to hurt or scare her?
- Do you think she was satisfied with the results?

➤ To finish off, go back to the cluster of "reserve" if you made one, and see if there are new words that should be included.

G. Media Role Models

1. Magazines

Since these magazines will not be cut up, you may be able to borrow a bunch from the library, in addition to your usual sources.

➤ Show a group of magazine covers which feature a single person on each one. It should be possible to identify the people or to know that they are professional models.

➤ First arrange the magazines in categories: women's magazines, news magazines, sports magazines, entertainment magazines, tabloids or whatever groups you have.

➤ Divide the students into pairs, and give each pair a category. Ask them to separate the covers in their category into men and women. Discuss which sex is represented in which categories. You may want to make a bar graph showing this information.

➤ Now study each category and ask what kinds of people are missing? Here are some possible questions:

- Are there women in the category? men?
- How well off are the people shown? Are poor people shown?
- What age groups are missing?
- Are there fat people?
- Are there people with disabilities?
- Are there people of colour? First Nations people?
- Are there lesbians and gay men?
- Are any other people missing?

➤ Some questions to consider:

- How much are these people like you?
- Who's missing? Why do some groups get their pictures on the magazine covers and not everyone?
- What happens to people who are not represented? How do they feel?
- What happens to teens when they have only these models to follow? What happens to adults?

2. TV

➤ View or discuss a large number of prime time TV shows. Make a list of the main characters.

- What kinds of shows have mostly male stars?
- What kind of shows have mostly women stars?
- Review the groups who were missing from magazine covers. Are these groups shown on TV?
- Are some groups made fun of or made to look stupid? How? In what ways?
- Discuss how you feel about yourself after watching TV. Do you feel pleased with yourself after watching some shows but not others? Does the amount you watch affect your self-esteem?

➤ Choose one episode of one show which the class can all watch. Using the lists developed earlier in the chapter, discuss whether any of these characters are role models for you. Some writing might come out of this reflection.

➤ Some questions to consider:

- Why do TV and magazines have so much power in our lives?
- What can we do to resist that power and make sure we think for ourselves?

H. Finding Our Own Role Models

For this activity, more able readers could do the exercise as outside class work and report to class at the end. In this case, get them started several periods before you want the reports.

For less able readers, you might help them find a short story or piece written by another student. Many of these collections and books are now available. See the list in Resources.

1. Report

➤ Ask students to find a book, poem, article or movie about a woman who inspires them. Ask them to write or tell the class about her, using the following questions as a guide:

- What is her name?
- What was her age at the time of the story?
- Where is she from?
- What was hard in her life?
- What did she accomplish?
- Who did she help?
- Did she get recognition or thanks?
- How is your life like hers? How is it different?
- What does she make you want to do or to be?

2. Other activities

➤ Students might want to write a poem about the woman they chose.

➤ The group might like to compile their writings into a book.

Resources

(See the Bibliography for complete listings.)

Birnie, Lisa and Sue Rodriguez. *Uncommon Will: The Death and Life of Sue Rodriguez*
Blackbridge, Persimmon and Sheila Gilhooly. *Still Sane*
Crone, Moira. *The Life of Lucy Fern*
Danica, Elly. *Don't: A Woman's Word*
Green, Howard and Don Sawyer. *NESA Activities Handbook for Native and Multicultural Classrooms*
Maracle, Lee. *I Am Woman*
Potrebenko, Helen. *Walking Slow*

First Person Accounts – Collections

Baxter, Sheila. *No Way to Live: Poor Women Speak Out*
Mukherjee, Arun. *Sharing Our Experience*
Silvera, Makeda. *Silenced*
Stewart, Donna. *Jobstories: I Like the Work; I Like the Money*

Student Writing

Almack, Shirley. *Street Mother*
Archibald, Jo-ann. *Courageous Spirits: Aboriginal Heroes of Our Children.*
 The teacher's guide that accompanies this book is excellent, with many more teaching suggestions and background information on aboriginal culture.
Des, 'Is. *Amelia's Daughter*
Green, Ann. K. *Coming Out of My Shell*
Head, Bessie. *The Collector of Treasures*
International Task Force on Literacy. *Words Are What I've Got*
Ndaba, Elizabeth. *I Told Myself I Am Going to Learn*
Nonesuch, Kate and Evelyn Battell, eds. *If You Could See Me Now*

Films

The following are from the National Film Board. The subject matter is briefly indicated.

Ellen's Story
 A woman's story about illiteracy and the devastating effects it had on her life.
Great Grand Mother
 European women come to the Prairies around the turn of the century.
Patricia's Moving Picture Show
 A middle-aged woman goes back to school.
The Honour of All
 A woman leads the way and her reserve solves its alcoholism problem.
The Impossible Takes a Little Longer
 Women deal with physical disabilities as part of their daily lives.
Lorri
Ruth
Debby and Sharon
 From *The Recovery Series.* In each of these three films women talk about their recovery from alcohol abuse.

Role Models from the Past

Interview Questions

Ask your partner about role models from the past. You could use some of these questions to get started. When you listen to your partner's answers, you might want to ask some questions that aren't on this page.

1. Remember when you were younger. Who was your role model?

2. Why did you look up to that person?

3. Did you change the way you acted to be more like that person?

4. Did you change the way you dressed?

5. Did you change the way you talked?

6. Did you change the way you spent your time?

7. Did you think differently about yourself?

8. Were these changes good? Did they make you happier, healthier, more successful?

9. Were the changes bad? Did they make you miserable? Unhealthy?

10. Have you changed your minds about any of the role models you had when you were younger?

Kirsten

I have a hero. Her name is Kirsten. She's my daughter and she's only two years old. My daughter has changed my life. First let me tell you what my life was like before she came along.

When I was growing up my life wasn't a happy one because my stepparents drank a lot. (I was adopted.)

I didn't eat well, didn't dress well or even sleep well because my parents were drinking with friends at our house on weekends and sometimes on weekdays too. I couldn't eat because of lots of drinking people at my house and there was no one to cook.

On weekdays when I had to go to school, if my mom and dad were drinking there was no one to clean me so I just had to go to school kind of dirty. Some of the kids would tease me and I didn't like it. I was eight at that time.

If they drank at my house they were very noisy. I couldn't sleep because they would talk, yell, and sometimes get in fights and it would frighten me. Sometimes I would go to my grandparents' place but some of my uncles were drinking too. I didn't have any choice but to stay. My parents' drinking went on for quite a while. I would cry and hope my parents would stop drinking.

My grades were bad when I did go to school. I started failing most of my subjects because it was hard for me to concentrate. It seemed like nobody cared about my having done badly in school.

I started thinking that my parents and relatives didn't care about me or if I went to school or not.

Instead of going to school and getting my education, I picked the wrong friends. I made friends with kids that dropped out of school, and had started drinking and getting themselves in trouble. Within a year or two I dropped out, too.

Knowing I wouldn't go back to school, I found a job and started working as a waitress. Though the wages were bad, I stayed on the job. I applied for other jobs but I couldn't get anything else because of my poor grades from school. I just had to stay with the job I had as a waitress.

My life wasn't as good as I wanted it to be. A number of people around me had good jobs and their wages were pretty good, too. So I started thinking that there was no use in living when my life was a mess. I didn't have an education. I didn't have a good job and I had problems at home with my parents.

But then I found out that I was pregnant. When I first found out I was pregnant I didn't want to believe it. I didn't want this to happen to me but I was four months at that time. I was having problems with my kidney so I had to stay in the hospital for a week to make sure the baby and I were okay.

Sometimes I couldn't sleep and I wanted to die because I wasn't happy about being pregnant. My whole life was a mess and I didn't want the baby to come into this world when everything was going wrong for me. But then one day they did an ultrasound and I saw the baby turning in me. I saw its head and hands and its feet moving. From that day on I was so happy and excited I couldn't stop smiling. I had seen the baby inside me. It was real! On July 19, 1990, I gave birth to a baby girl. She was seven pounds seven ounces, so small and peaceful. I called her Kirsten.

Frequently when I think about alcohol, I wonder what I would be like if I drank, though I don't. Would my life be a mess? Would I get into trouble? But, most of all, who would take care of my daughter, the daughter I love so much and the most important thing in my life? Would my daughter then be in the same situation as I was growing up? She probably would!

When my daughter Kirsten was born everything changed. I don't think about alcohol any more (what it would be like in my life). I went through all that with my parents when they were drinking while I was growing up.

I wanted to go back to school when Kirsten was born because I couldn't raise her without an education and career for myself. I didn't want to live on social assistance all my life. I know that education is the most important thing in my life – something that we need now to get through life if we want to be independent.

Most teenagers don't think that, all they think about or want to do is drink and have parties.

Some adolescents themselves are parents, too, and are raising their kids. Some of them will drink when their babies are one or two months old or even new-borns. When they drink I wonder how the babies are doing. One thing I've learned is that when people or parents drink a lot they can't take care of themselves or anyone else.

My daughter gave me a reason to live. She has shown me that there are a lot of things worth living for and even though some people don't show they care for you, they really do.

My daughter gave me hope. I know that I can make it through school and anything else that I want if I just try hard enough. I can do it and I am! Thank you, Kirsten.

– Debbie Franki

Aboriginal Ancestry: Dene (Metis-Dogrib)

Grade 10, Chief Jimmy Bruneau School in Rae-Edzo, Northwest Territories.

From *Courageous Spirits: Aboriginal Heroes of Our Children* by Jo-ann Archibald. Mokakit. Available from Theytus Books. Used by permission.

Still Sane

"I had always had crushes on my girl friends and women teachers and I couldn't seem to get interested in men, no matter how hard I tried. So I sort of knew I was different, even to the point of looking up homosexuality in the library. I read about butches and femmes and women wanting to be men, and how they were sick and drank and ended up committing suicide. That didn't sound like me, so I figured I was some other kind of weird.

But finally this woman Diane seduced me, and all my questions were answered. I know what I'd been wanting. My whole being had the jitters but it felt like coming home. Diane was older and supposedly wiser and she said being a lesbian wasn't that easy. She said I was bound to have lots of subconscious guilt which I would have to resolve in order to have a happy life. She'd been seeing a shrink for years. So I went to see a shrink too, a woman shrink, which I thought would be easier.

I was quite on edge but happy and spinning. The shrink was very grave and said it was serious and bad. I got a bit upset and even shed six or seven tears, so the shrink gave me my first Valium. After I left, she phoned the Royal Hospital. She said she had this sicko lesbian who should be hospitalized for awhile. She said she could certify me against my will since maybe I was self-destructive. After all, I had cried in her office and I was a lesbian to boot. I spent the next three years in and out of mental hospitals."

[While Sheila was hospitalized she was drugged many times, often by force. She often tried to escape. She was given shock therapy many times. Even then she knew she was a lesbian. She slashed herself with a razor while drugged. She tried to kill herself. When she "behaved" they would let her sign herself out but there was no life on the outside. The shock treatments ruined her memory until she couldn't remember enough to do a simple warehouse job. She would live in a room in a rooming house because all her friends thought she was "sick." She was drugged all the time, even on the outside. Sometimes she would sign herself back in. Finally they moved her to Strackville, the place for the worst cases. This scared her a lot.]

"I decided I had to get out of Strackville. I decided it didn't matter if I was some kind of crazy person who needed their protection to keep from flipping into a total blackout. I was scared of flipping out but I was more scared of Strackville. Some people spent their lives there. Some people died there. Me, I was going to pass for normal and get out.

So there I was, trying to pass for normal, all drugged up in this place that stinks of shit and Lysol and every day is endlessly boring except for the occasional flashes of violence and I'm powerless to protect myself and I'm normal. Normal women don't talk about being a lesbian and they're always cheerful. I was always good and smiling, never complaining or bothering the staff, keeping my mouth shut and smiling, always obedient and quiet and nice and smiling, in the middle of this hellhole, smiling and smiling. And I did it. After three months I got out.

After I got out of Strackville, I was very calm and normal and a bit unreal. I had to stay with my family and see a shrink at first but I stayed real quiet and boring and eventually was allowed my own life. I moved in with this woman Judy. We were lovers, but she thought of herself as a straight – like falling in love with me was just this accident. She didn't want any of her friends to know and she was always after me to dress more femme-like in public.

I got a job as a law clerk. I had to lie to them about the three year gap in my life. I was getting lots of practice in lying. I went to work every day, and tried to pass for normal and not feel too much. I was off tranquilizers by then, but I drank a lot, just like the lesbians I used to read about.

So that was my life for the next three years, and then I met this women at a sociology of deviance class. She called herself a lesbian just like that, in public even, and she also called herself a feminist. She had a lot of friends who were also lesbians and they all walked around like they had this Special Wonderful Thing. Like they were proud. I had never before in my entire life met anyone who said it was even OK to be a lesbian, and then all of a sudden there were all these women who said it was even great. And my life began to change."

[Years later, Sheila and Persimmon made this book. It took three years to make. When the time comes to show the sculptures, they are worried about what people will think. Would they be sympathetic but really think Sheila was sick? Would they think she was weird?]

"At the opening of the show lots of women told me they'd been there too, or their mothers or sisters had. Some of them I didn't know and some I did – women I'd known for years without knowing that. There we all were swapping stories and sometimes we were angry and sometimes sad but we all knew we had something to flaunt. When you flaunt something nobody can use it against you.

Each personal story made me feel safer and each strong survivor made me prouder. They also reassured me that what I remembered had really happened even though the chronology is still garbled at times and some parts are blank. Being drugged or shocked blurs much of the order, but I heard my experiences told back to me and then I felt sure.

For years I have had a political appreciation that I am a survivor for getting out of there, not a failure for getting locked up in the first place."

From *Still Sane* by Persimmon Blackbridge and Sheila Gilhooly. Press Gang. Used by permission.

Headlines

Sue Rodriguez

The headlines below come from Canadian newspapers and magazines. They are all from stories about Sue Rodriguez. They tell her story in the order it happened.

What can you remember or figure out about the Sue Rodriguez case just from looking at the headlines?

Who owns my life? dying woman asks
Globe and Mail Nov. 25, 1992

Woman seeks life with dignity, B.C. court told
Globe and Mail Feb. 16, 1993

"I am getting weaker." A woman wanting legal suicide has another chance
Maclean's March 22, 1993

Death Wish: Would you choose assisted suicide?
Chatelaine July 1993

Humanist of the Year: A Portrait of Courage
Humanist in Canada Summer 1993

Dying woman hopes others helped by loss
Vancouver Sun Oct. 1, 1993

A Wrenching Decision
Canada's top court rejects assisted suicide
Maclean's Oct. 11, 1993

Rodriguez case latest controversy for Robinson, rebel M.P. with a cause
Toronto Daily Star Feb. 15, 1994

A private death ends a very public battle
Toronto Daily Star Feb. 19, 1994

Remembering hero who "moved a nation"
Vancouver Sun Feb 28, 1994

The legacy of Sue Rodriguez
Maclean's Feb. 28, 1994

The Story of Sue Rodriguez

Sue Rodriguez is 41. She is the mother of a seven-year-old son. She is separated from her husband. She discovers she has Lou Gehrig's disease, ALS, in August 1991.

Sue tries various cures and meets with other victims of the disease. By April 1992 she has decided to commit suicide but has not decided when. Sue Rodriguez knows there is no cure for her disease and she could spend a long time dying. She feels she has a right to commit suicide, with the help of a doctor, at a time of her choosing. She wants to die before there is no quality left in her life. She wants to decide when that is.

She knows she will not have the physical strength to commit suicide and so she will need help. She also expects to be fully aware and able to make the decision. In April 1992 she begins to look for a doctor who will help her commit suicide.

She does not want her son to remember her as completely helpless and out of it. She does not want endless, boring, painful days when she has no control. She does not want to break the law. She decides to spend the rest of her life trying to get the law changed for herself and others.

She meets John Hofsess of the Right to Die Society in August 1992. He believes people should be able to choose when to die and to have help if necessary. He wants to publicize Sue's story to help her and to get the law changed.

Sue decides to go public with her request for legally assisted suicide. She hires a famous lawyer, Chris Considine, in October 1992. Soon Sue is on national television and is interviewed by the newspapers. She is interviewed many times about her disease. They ask her why she wants to commit suicide and why she wants a doctor to help.

Sue loses her first court battle for the right to physician-assisted suicide in the B.C. court in January 1993. She becomes friends with Svend Robinson who is the lawyer of the Right to Die society and a Member of Parliament.

Hofsess has been working with Sue to publicize her case but now she is very weak, can't write anymore and can barely talk. He writes a letter to a Vancouver paper and signs her name without consulting her. He says he is sure he knows what she would like to say. Sue is furious. By doing this he proves how dangerous it is to give anyone power to act for another person. He makes the case much harder to win.

Sue goes to court three more times and loses every time. There are always some judges for and some judges against. The last decision was announced on Sept. 30, 1993.

She has some supporters. There are also many people who argue against her. When her case goes to trial, many churches, some groups of handicapped people and an organisation of doctors all tell their opinions. So does her lawyer, the Right to Die Society and the Governments of Canada and B.C.

People who don't agree with her also write her letters and write about her in the newspapers. They often hurt her. They say personal things about her. They often say they don't want anybody to think they agree with her.

On February 11, 1994, Sue commits suicide at her home with morphine and sleeping pills. An unnamed doctor and Svend Robinson are present.

Sue got all of Canada talking about her case. Because of her case the Government of Canada will have to debate the issue. They may decide to make a law allowing assisted suicide.

7. Women and Work

by Selvi Varathappan Dyck, Evelyn Battell, Janet Isserlis and Kate Nonesuch

THIS CHAPTER is based on an original draft by Selvi Varathappan Dyck; since she was unable to complete the work, the other authors have revised it and added additional material.

photo: Moon Joyce

Introduction

Women sometimes restrict their range of occupational choices unnecessarily because they may explore only traditionally female occupations. This chapter highlights the possibility of expanding women's occupational vistas rather than narrowing their opportunities by excluding certain work. The question of women and work is also interesting to women who are not seeking employment. The chapter challenges learners to consider some widely held beliefs about women working.

A. Hands and Skills

1. Analyze ordinary tasks

The point of this exercise is to make learners aware of all the tasks they do in a day, particularly for others.

The skills and "hidden" skills may not be apparent to learners immediately. Be prepared to take a good amount of time, encouraging learners to work in pairs or small groups to develop their lists of both obvious and hidden skills.

➤ Ask learners to describe all the things they do in a day, perhaps suggesting "cooking breakfast" and "taking children to school" if they seem to have difficulty getting started.
➤ After this list has been completed, ask learners to reflect upon (and start to analyze) the skills needed in order to accomplish these tasks.

task	skills required	"hidden" skills
cooking breakfast	cooking	food shopping, budgeting, knowledge of nutrition, operating appliances
food shopping	list making, reading (labels, pricing)	nutrition, budgeting, math
getting kids to school	driving or using transport	reading, operating a car, knowledge of traffic rules, bus routes

2. Collage

➤ Ask learners to think of all the things they do with their hands – from stirring pots to writing letters, brushing teeth and hair, changing diapers, driving cars, wrapping parcels, finding coins for machines.
➤ Write a list of everything they suggest on a flip chart.

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➤ Gather as many magazines as you can and invite learners to create collages featuring hands. They can work independently or together.

➤ When the collages have been finished, ask learners to write something in response to the topic – poems, journal writings, personal recollections. The only requirement here is to think about how hands are used to accomplish many, many things.

There is no predetermined focus here, other than to see the many ways in which hands will be used in the collages. Some hands, perfectly manicured and posed, will inevitably be placed in juxtaposition to working, weathered hands. As well, learners can add their own drawings to the collages.

In the event that someone in your group is unable to use her hands, you may want to avoid this exercise. If, however, she is comfortable with the group, she may wish to talk about the ways in which she accomplishes the things she needs to do without having her hands available to her.

This activity grew out of an exercise suggested by Nina Wallerstein in *Language and Culture in Conflict: Problem-Posing in the ESL Classroom.*

3. Skills analysis

➤ Ask learners to think specifically about the skills they use in doing things with their hands, and to expand their thinking to the skills they use in everyday life – budgeting, driving, cooking, reading, writing, speaking, thinking and so on. Ask them which skills are transferable from task to task, and which skills are specific to a particular task.

task	**specific skills**	**transferable skills**
driving	knowing how to operate a car	reading signs, judgement, reading maps, attentiveness
cooking	knowing how to combine foods and spices, use an oven	shopping, budgeting, math, measuring, organization

210
Reading

Concrete Fever*

Seven and one half yards of concrete
and every last pebble in place
A certain kind of concrete steps
I'd never built before, and
six different patio slopes all having to run
with perfect symmetry
to that one post hole marker
of a drain pipe
and an architect antsy eagle eye for the least mistake
or merely visual flaw

I worried, I cursed, I adjusted and nailed
and by six o'clock my steps are a grace
to behold, a joy to ascend
and the water from the hoses
of the concrete finisher
rolls sweetly down all those six slopes
and into that bull's-eye drain
I love water!
I love concrete!
I love the work I did today!

– Kate Braid

*From Covering Rough Ground written by Kate Braid, published by Polestar press Ltd. 1011 Commercial Dr. Vancouver, Canada V5L 3X1. Used by permission.

210

4. Poems

Read the poems "Concrete Fever" and "Think Like a Weightlifter, Think Like a Woman" from *Covering Rough Ground* by Kate Braid (pages 210 – 212). The activities suggested below could be used with both of the poems.

➤ Read each poem aloud a number of times, perhaps reading sections as a group, or taking parts, or reader's theatre style, each student reading a sentence.

➤ Some questions to consider after each poem:
- What feelings does Kate have?
- What qualities does she demonstrate?
- How is she like you?

➤ Think about the attitude people have to women doing this work. Some questions to think about:
- How would men in your life respond to a woman carpenter?
- Would they disapprove? Why or why not?
- Would they be supportive? How?
- Would they work well with a woman on the job?
- How would the other women you know react to a woman carpenter?
- Why do women want traditionally male jobs?

211
Reading

Think Like a Weightlifter,
Think Like a Woman*

and the foreman orders
in a voice like a chainsaw,
Hoist those timbers
by hand to the second floor.
Crane's broken down.

I keep my mouth shut
with difficulty, knowing
how much a six by six timber
twelve feet long and fresh
from the Fraser River, knowing
how much it weighs.

Lorne, my partner, says nothing,
addresses the modest mountain of timbers
towering over our heads, smelling
sweetly nostalgic for forest.

Weighing in with the wood he faces,
with a belly like a great swelling bole,
he shakes off my motion to help and
bends to as if to pick up a penny,
scoops up the timber and packs it, 50 feet,
to lean against the damp grey sides
of the concrete core.
When he doesn't look back,
it's my turn.

And now, because I need this job, and
because it's the first day and because
every eye is watching The Girl,
I bend my knees as the book says,
think like a weightlifter, take the beam
by its middle and order my body
to lift.

211

212
Reading

great tree, sweating pitch,
with a sucking sound,
away to the designated spot,

Alone, I carry beams to Lorne
who alone heaves them with the slightest grunt
to the labourer who bends from the second floor
with a hurry-up call,
Faster! Faster!

No. I will never be a carpenter, I think, never
able to work like these men. Then
Lorne falters.
Without thinking I reach up my to arms beside
and push with all my might.
The beam flies to the second floor and mindless,
I turn to fetch him another.

Without a word
Lorne follows me back to the pile,
lifts one end and helps me
carry the next timber to the wall.
Without a word we both push it up,
continue this path together
find a rhythm, a pace
that feels more like dancing.

Lorne says, *You walk different.* Yes.
For on this day I am suddenly
much, much stronger, a woman with the strength
of two.

– Kate Braid

*From Covering Rough Ground written by Kate Braid, published by Polestar press Ltd. 1011 Commercial Dr. Vancouver, Canada V5L 3X1. Used by permission.

212

5. Guided imagery

➤ Introduce the activity by telling the learners you will ask them to imagine what a day would be like for a woman carpenter going to a union job as the only woman on the crew. Your voice is going to ask them to pretend to be someone else or to be themselves in a different situation, or to watch someone going through these motions. They do not have to report what they think or see.

➤ Ask people to sit as comfortably and loosely as possible. They might want to move to the floor or lay their heads on a table or lean back, hands loose or loosely clasped.

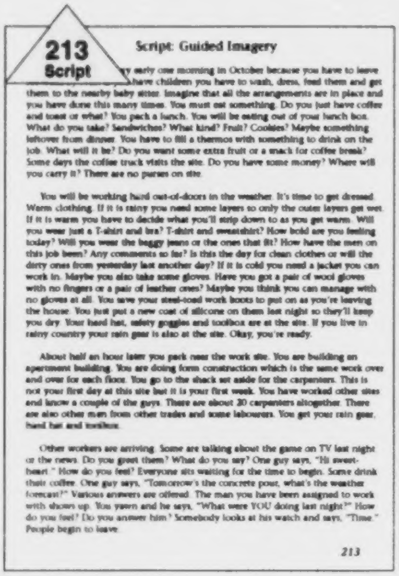
➤ Explain that we are going to try to imagine a situation and we want to feel as many details as possible. We can't get this wrong. If the exercise helps us picture the situation even partly, we have succeeded. At the very least we will have a few minutes of quiet time to think!

➤ Read the script (pages 213 – 214) clearly and slowly. Whenever the script asks the participants to make a choice or do something, pause.

➤ Compare notes on the experience. Some questions to consider:

- What did you notice?
- Did you like the feeling of being a carpenter?
- What was new or different?

Learners might like to write a guided imagery for some trade they are familiar with – including being a housewife – and leading the other students through it.



213 Script

Script: Guided Imagery

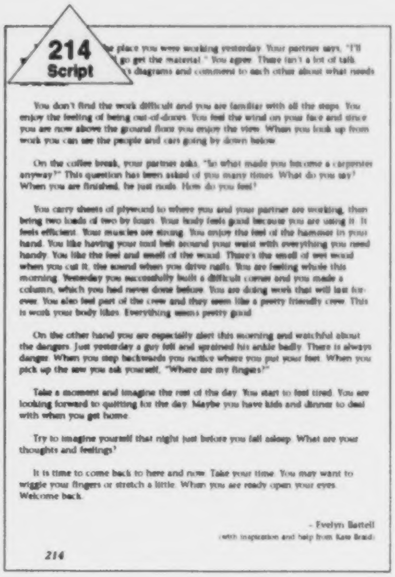
...y early one morning in October because you have to leave ... have children you have to wash, dress, feed them and get them to the nearby baby sitter. Imagine that all the arrangements are in place and you have done this many times. You must eat something. Do you just have coffee and toast or what? You pack a lunch. You will be eating out of your lunch box. What do you take? Sandwiches? What kind? Fruit? Cookies? Maybe something leftover from dinner. You have to fill a thermos with something to drink on the job. What will it be? Do you want some extra fruit or a snack for coffee break? Some days the coffee truck visits the site. Do you have some money? Where will you carry it? There are no purses on site.

You will be working hard out-of-doors in the weather. It's time to get dressed. Warm clothing. If it is rainy you need some layers so only the outer layers get wet. If it is warm you have to decide what you'll strip down to as you get warm. Will you wear just a T-shirt and bra? T-shirt and sweatshirt? How bold are you feeling today? Will you wear the baggy jeans or the ones that fit? How have the men on this job been? Any comments so far? Is this the day for clean clothes or will the dirty ones from yesterday last another day? If it is cold you need a jacket you can work in. Maybe you also take some gloves. Have you got a pair of wool gloves with no fingers or a pair of leather ones? Maybe you think you can manage with no gloves at all. You save your steel-toed work boots to put on as you're leaving the house. You just put a new coat of silicone on them last night so they'll keep you dry. Your hard hat, safety goggles and toolbox are at the site. If you live in rainy country your rain gear is also at the site. Okay, you're ready.

About half an hour later you park near the work site. You are building an apartment building. You are doing form construction which is the same work over and over for each floor. You go to the shack set aside for the carpenters. This is not your first day at this site but it is your first week. You have worked other sites and know a couple of the guys. There are about 20 carpenters altogether. There are also other men from other trades and some labourers. You get your rain gear, hard hat and toolbox.

Other workers are arriving. Some are talking about the game on TV last night or the news. Do you greet them? What do you say? One guy says, "Hi sweetheart." How do you feel? Everyone sits waiting for the time to begin. Some drink their coffee. One guy says, "Tomorrow's the concrete pour, what's the weather forecast?" Various answers are offered. The man you have been assigned to work with shows up. You yawn and he says, "What were YOU doing last night?" How do you feel? Do you answer him? Somebody looks at his watch and says, "Time." People begin to leave.

213



214 Script

...e place you were working yesterday. Your partner says, "I'll ... go get the material." You agree. There isn't a lot of talk ... diagrams and comment to each other about what needs ...

You don't find the work difficult and you are familiar with all the steps. You enjoy the feeling of being out-of-doors. You feel the wind on your face and since you are now above the ground floor you enjoy the view. When you look up from work you can see the people and cars going by down below.

On the coffee break, your partner asks, "So what made you become a carpenter anyway?" This question has been asked of you many times. What do you say? When you are finished, he just nods. How do you feel?

You carry sheets of plywood to where you and your partner are working, then bring two loads of two by fours. Your body feels good because you are using it. It feels efficient. Your muscles are strong. You enjoy the feel of the hammer in your hand. You like having your tool belt around your waist with everything you need handy. You like the feel and smell of the wood. There's the smell of wet wood when you cut it, the sound when you drive nails. You are feeling whole this morning. Yesterday you successfully built a difficult corner and you made a column, which you had never done before. You are doing work that will last forever. You also feel part of the crew and they seem like a pretty friendly crew. This is work your body likes. Everything seems pretty good.

On the other hand you are especially alert this morning and watchful about the dangers. Just yesterday a guy fell and sprained his ankle badly. There is always danger. When you step backwards you notice where you put your feet. When you pick up the saw you ask yourself, "Where are my fingers?"

Take a moment and imagine the rest of the day. You start to feel tired. You are looking forward to quitting for the day. Maybe you have kids and dinner to deal with when you get home.

Try to imagine yourself that night just before you fall asleep. What are your thoughts and feelings?

It is time to come back to here and now. Take your time. You may want to wiggle your fingers or stretch a little. When you are ready open your eyes. Welcome back.

– Evelyn Battell
(with inspiration and help from Kate Braid)

214

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B. Women in Trades: A Film Festival

You may want to arrange these films at intervals throughout the chapter, or show two or three on succeeding days. They are presented together here, with some suggestions for discussion and other activities.

Films about Canadian women in trades include *Laila, Pretend You're Wearing a Barrel, She's a Railroader* and *Moving Mountains* from the National Film Board. These are 8 to 23 minutes long.

Trade Secrets: Blue Collar Women Speak Out, from California, is excellent. It features interviews with a number of women, both white women and women of colour, and presents the point of view of the boss and co-workers. It is 23 minutes long.

1. Introduction

➤ Before each film, discuss what learners already know about the job featured in the film. Some questions to consider:

- What do you imagine the job in the film involves?
- What would the woman actually do all day?
- Do you know anyone who does the job?

2. Guided discussion

➤ After the film, ask for reactions, and make sure everyone has the details straight.

➤ Some questions to consider:

- What would the prerequisites for this job be? Make a detailed list.
- What physical qualities are needed?
- What interpersonal skills are needed?
- Are there unusual time demands compared to other jobs?
- Is reading or writing required on the job?
- What training is required and where do people get it?
- Could you do this job?

➤ Find out what people doing these jobs in your area get paid. Ask local union and employment centres. Make a graph of this information.

If learners are interested, they might like to invite a woman who works in trades or technology to come and talk to the class. The class should prepare some questions before the guest arrives.

C. Analyzing Media

To do the work in this section, choose some examples of media images of working women. A number of feature-length films, such as *Working Girl, 9 to 5* and *Norma Rae,* portray women at work in various capacities, in traditional roles and rebelling against these roles. In films and in real life, key supporting personnel such as wives, mothers and secretaries are often given minor roles.

There are many television programs which show women working at home and at many different kinds of jobs. These programs can serve as wonderful discussion starters. You might also want to look at TV commercials that show women working. Whatever the medium (film, television, popular songs, magazine images), the questions suggested below may help learners focus their thinking on women in the workplace.

1. Guided discussion

➤ Some questions to consider:

- What do you notice about the women you see here?
- What are the women doing?
- Are the women respected by others? Why? Why not? How can you tell?
- Do you think this portrayal of women is accurate? Do you think it's realistic? Why? Why not?
- What do you think the audience is meant to think or feel after seeing this film/reading this story/ seeing this advertisement?
- What's the main idea of the film/TV show/ advertisement? Do you agree with the main idea? Do you think it's fair to women?
- Why was this made? What should you think or want as a result of seeing it?
- If you could change anything about it, what would you change, and why?
- What and who are missing from it? Why?

D. Song: "Bosses' Lament"

This song is recorded on the cassette tape included with this book.

Bosses' Lament

by Terry Dash

Well I don't know what to make of it, just where it all will end
I haven't been so mortified since early 1910
Well I've heard of war and famine, but things got really hard
When the ladies at my office got hold of union cards
CHORUS:
Whatever will we do, whatever on this earth
When all the secretaries demand what they are worth?

My girl she runs the office, You know that's what girls do
She does her job, yes, very well, and most of my job, too
But it's certainly outrageous, it's completely out of line
When she demands a salary commensurate with mine
CHORUS:
Now my secretary tallies up the things that I must do
She keeps a list of all my friends, so I'll know who is who
My lord if she should leave me, oh how would I survive?
I haven't made a phone call since 1945
CHORUS:
Now there's rumours of a walkout, rumours of a strike
rumours of a picket, a slowdown and the like
But I've got my survival plan, in case of storm and strife.
Here's how I'll get the job done, I'll give it to my wife.
CHORUS:
Well I've had about enough of this, I just can't comprehend
Whoever do they think they are to organize like men?
Well I believe in order, the tried and trusted norm
I'll damn well see her fired if I can find the form
CHORUS: (twice)

From *Split/Shift: Songs and Poems of the Workplace* performed by Fraser Union.
© 1989 Fraser Union with the Vancouver Indutrial Writers' Union.
Used by permission.

1. Introduction

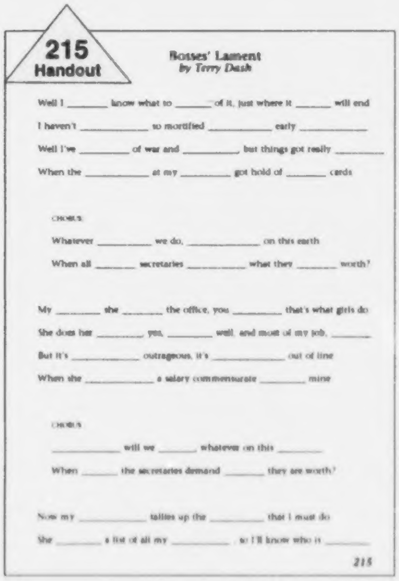
➤ Before listening to the song, ask learners, "What's a lament?"

➤ Tell the learners this is a song about a boss's or supervisor's problem. Ask them to think of what problems a boss could have, working, perhaps, with these prompts:

- What is a boss?
- What does a boss do?
- What responsibilities does a boss have?
- What privileges does a boss have?

➤ Encourage learners to talk about bosses for whom they have worked. If learners have had little direct paid work experience, you might ask them to think about what the word 'boss' conjures for them.

➤ After the discussion, play the song once and then give learners the cloze exercise (pages 215 – 216) and ask them to fill in the missing words, playing the song as many times as is needed or until learners are ready to assist one another in completing the cloze.



215
Handout

Bosses' Lament
by Terry Dash

Well I ______ know what to ______ of it, just where it ______ will end
I haven't ________ so mortified ________ early ________
Well I've ________ of war and ________, but things got really ________
When the ________ at my ________ got hold of ______ cards

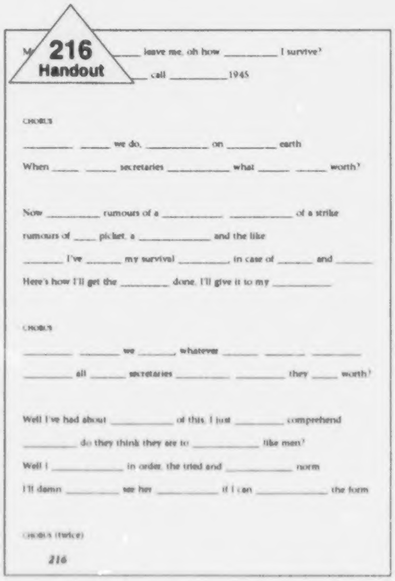
CHORUS
Whatever ________ we do, ________ on this earth
When all ______ secretaries ________ what they ______ worth?

My ______ she ______ the office, you ______ that's what girls do
She does her ______ yes, ______ well, and most of my job, ______
But it's ________ outrageous, it's ________ out of line
When she ________ a salary commensurate ______ mine

CHORUS
________ will we ______, whatever on this ______
When ______ the secretaries demand ______ they are worth?

Now my ________ tallies up the ________ that I must do
She ______ a list of all my ________, so I'll know who is ______

215



216
Handout

M ______ leave me, oh how ______ I survive?
______ call ______ 1945

CHORUS
______ ______ we do, ________ on ______ earth
When ______ ______ secretaries ________ what ______ ______ worth?

Now ______ rumours of a ________ ________ of a strike
rumours of ____ picket, a ________ and the like
______ I've ______ my survival ______, in case of ______ and ______
Here's how I'll get the ______ done, I'll give it to my ________

CHORUS
______ ______ we ______, whatever ______ ______ ______
______ all ______ secretaries ______ ______ they ____ worth?

Well I've had about ________ of this, I just ______ comprehend
______ do they think they are to ________ like men?
Well I ________ in order, the tried and ________ norm
I'll damn ______ see her ________ if I can ________ the form

CHORUS (twice)

216

Alternatively, this question can be asked after all the work on the song is finished; learners don't need to know the title before they hear the song.

Advanced learners might be asked to freewrite for 5 or 10 minutes, with the topic being "bosses." For learners who may be less willing to write, small group discussions around bosses they have known (or know of through television, film or even song) might be a good way to get ideas flowing.

Completing a cloze exercise on a song gives learners a chance to first focus on hearing lyrics, if not actually "hearing" meaning. It's one of the few times an instructor can legitimately say, "Fill in these blanks" and not be concerned that it is just busy work.

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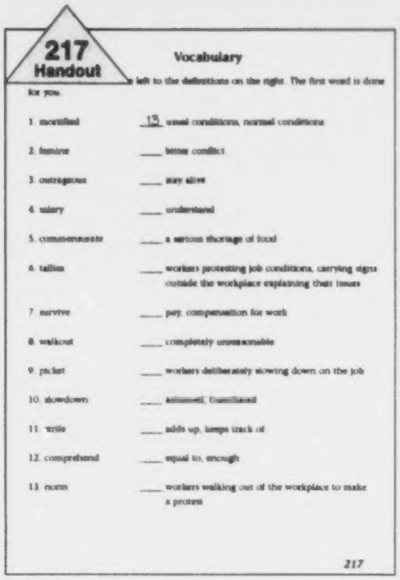


217 Handout

Vocabulary

left to the definitions on the right. The first word is done for you.

1. mortified	13 usual conditions, normal conditions
2. famine	___ bitter conflict
3. outrageous	___ stay alive
4. salary	___ understand
5. commensurate	___ a serious shortage of food
6. tallies	___ workers protesting job conditions, carrying signs outside the workplace explaining their issues
7. survive	___ pay, compensation for work
8. walkout	___ completely unreasonable
9. picket	___ workers deliberately slowing down on the job
10. slowdown	___ ashamed, humiliated
11. strife	___ adds up, keeps track of
12. comprehend	___ equal to, enough
13. norm	___ workers walking out of the workplace to make a protest

217

➤ Once everyone has completed the sheet, take the time to go over any needed vocabulary work, using the matching exercise (page 217).

2. Guided discussion

➤ Ask learners to respond to the song in pairs or small groups. Some questions to consider:

- What does the song make them think of?
- What is a union?
- What does it mean to demand what one is worth?

Learners may be interested in doing some research about unions. The focus of this song is on unions and organizing, but many people have difficulty understanding the differences between a union and non-union shop and/or may be uncomfortable with some of these issues. If this is the case, you may choose to focus on women's rights (and lack of rights) in the workplace.

3. Vocabulary review

➤ Both EAL and literacy learners might benefit from a review of the many idioms used in the song, as well as particular terms referring to labour issues:

- I don't know what to make of it
- just where it all will end
- got hold of
- whatever on this earth
- what they are worth
- it's completely out of line
- rumours of a walkout
- a strike
- a picket
- a slowdown
- the tried and trusted norm
- I'll damn well see her fired

4. Further discussion

➤ Ask learners to talk about work that is traditionally thought of as "women's work." Make a list of the jobs they suggest and ask them to discuss the qualifications needed to do such work. For example:.

secretary	**nurse**
need to know how to type	medical training
phone skills	common sense
organizational skills	ability to act quickly, follow directions
physical stamina	
computer skills	

➤ You may then ask learners to talk about the differences between doctors and nurses, secretaries and the people for whom they work, teachers and principals, etc.

It's likely that learners will come to the realization that many of these "support" jobs require many of the same skills and abilities as those required in more "male" jobs. The song points out the fact that secretaries need to know almost (if not) as much as bosses in order to keep an office and a business running smoothly

If there is interest, ask students to research the salary ranges of the positions they've listed as well as the salary ranges for other work (nurses/doctors, secretaries/the administrators they work for, teachers/principals, domestic workers, childcare workers, etc.).

There are many ways to use this song, but focusing on the differences in pay and status between administrators and support staff is a primary objective. While some learners and tutors may not want to take on union issues, it is important to bring out the fact that secretaries perform many, many tasks in the course of doing their job and that their abilities are often undervalued – in terms of both the lack of status accorded their work and hard cash.

E. Song: "Canning Salmon"

This song is recorded on the cassette tape included with this book.

Canning Salmon

by Linda Chobotuck ©1985

The guys on the dock laze around, race the forklift
and sass the floor lady till it's time for their tea
They sit at the table by the window that opens
and they get paid a buck more an hour than me

CHORUS:
High is the smell, low is the pay
long are the hours, why do we stay?
Somewhere outside a whole summer slips away
while we're stuck in here canning salmon

The machinery's so loud that we say we've gone can-deaf
[The] shift is long over before we can hear
They keep the noise level just under the limit
So they don't have to buy us the right safety gear

CHORUS:

First we can spring so heavy our arms ache
Then we do sockeye which we pack with ease
Then we do pinks, all mashed up and rotten
So they're packed up in pound tins and shipped overseas

CHORUS:

Last night we were waiting for a boat on the Fraser
So they kept us on line, just standing around
We didn't know that outside on the river
the boat had flipped over, two men had drowned

High is the cost, low is the pay
long are the hours, why do we stay?
Somewhere outside a whole summer slips away
while we're stuck in here canning salmon

From *Split/Shift: Songs and Poems of the Workplace*. Performed by Fraser Union.
© 1989 Fraser Union with the Vancouver Industrial Writers' Union. Used by permission.

1. Introduction

➤ Bring in a can of salmon, and place it in full view of the group. Ask learners to tell you anything and everything they can think of about that can. Encourage any answers – "It's salmon," "It's round," "It's expensive," "It's on sale this week at Safeway."

➤ When learners feel that they have no more to say about it (and if they haven't already begun to talk about the following), ask them:

- Where did the tin of salmon come from?
- What's inside? How did it get there?
- Who catches the fish?
- What happens to the fish after it's caught?
- Who actually cans salmon? What's the process?

➤ In terms of the larger issues of factory work, repetitive, uncomfortable work, and working conditions, ask learners to share their understanding and perhaps experience of food processing or other kinds of work.

➤ After the discussion, play the song once, give learners the cloze sheet (pages 218 – 219) and ask them to fill in the missing words, playing the song as many times as is needed or until learners are ready to assist one another in completing the cloze.

218
Handout

Canning Salmon
by Linda Chobotuck (c)1985

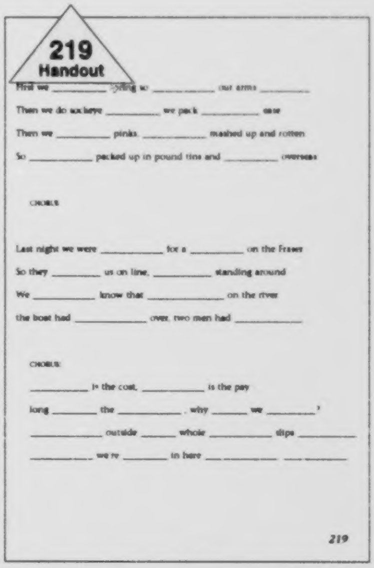
The guys on the dock _____ around, _____ the forklift
and _____ the floor lady till it's _____ for their tea
They sit at the _____ by the window that _____
and they get paid a _____ more an hour than me

CHORUS:
High is the _____, low _____ the pay
long are the _____, why do _____ stay?
Somewhere _____ a _____ summer slips away
while we're stuck in _____ canning salmon

The _____ so loud that we say _____ gone can-deaf
[The] shift is _____ over before we can _____
They keep the noise _____ just under the _____
So they don't have to buy us the _____ _____ gear

CHORUS

218



219
Handout

First we _____ -ying so _____ our arms _____
Then we do sockeye _____ we pack _____ case
Then we _____ pinks _____ mashed up and rotten
So _____ packed up in pound tins and _____ overseas

CHORUS

Last night we were _____ for a _____ on the Fraser
So they _____ us on line, _____ standing around
We _____ know that _____ on the river
the boat had _____ over, two men had _____

CHORUS:
_____ is the cost, _____ is the pay
long _____ the _____, why _____ we _____?
_____ outside _____ whole _____ slips _____
_____ we're _____ in here _____ _____

219

➤ Once everyone has completed the sheet, take the time to go over any needed vocabulary work.

Depending on learners' interest in salmon, per se, they could research packing procedures – how has technology helped or hindered the process? What work is involved? Who does that work?

Other areas of discussion that could arise, given learners' interest and experience, include physical labour, seasonal work, field work, fisheries, agriculture, even shop, factory or post office work at Christmas rush.

Some students may have stories to share about canning, field work or even gardening they have done as a part of their families' means of producing and preserving food. Encourage learners to share these stories and perhaps to focus on different jobs that were allocated to boys and girls, men and women.

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2. Writing

➤ Find photos in the library of women canning salmon.

➤ Ask learners to talk about these pictures, perhaps to read the texts, as time and interest allow.

➤ Ask learners to choose one of the women in one of the photos, and write from her point of view:

- Describe a day at work to a task force investigating working conditions in the industry.
- Write a letter to a friend far away.
- Write a diary entry.

In the case of both songs, an alternative approach is simply to listen to the songs with learners and to then respond to their responses to the songs – by eliciting questions, pursuing some of the exercises suggested above, or by encouraging learners to design their own questions and areas of study based on their interest in the songs, and perhaps in other areas covered in this or other chapters.

The book *A Newfoundland Spell* contains stories written by adult learners in ABE programs in Newfoundland, many of which directly address issues of the fisheries and their closures. (See Resources on page 209.)

F. Barriers

1. Guided discussion

➤ Ask learners to discuss the following myths about women and work:

- Women aren't reliable workers because they often have to look after sick children.
- Women are too emotional to work in high pressure jobs like law enforcement and fire fighting.
- Women don't like to get dirty.
- Women aren't strong enough to work on construction sites.
- Women spend too much time talking about feelings and they gossip at work.
- Women are too emotional to be good at business.

➤ Ask learners to discuss the truthfulness (if any) of these statements and also ask if they can think of other negative stereotypes about women and work.

➤ Ask the group to think about how can they respond to these negative statements.

➤ What **real** and **perceived** barriers exist for the women in your group as they contemplate employment?

For example:

real barriers	perceived barriers	possible solutions
unequal responsibility for children	women are irresponsible about work; they'll miss too much work if their kids are sick	good childcare; some flexibility at the work site
need for certification, training	it's too difficult to learn a trade	research into training requirements
cost of tuition for training	training's too expensive	bursaries, sponsorship, financial aid
need for reliable transportation	it's too far to travel	carpools, public transportation

➤ Once women have thoroughly discussed the barriers they envision, they may be prepared to return to the list of occupations they brainstormed at the beginning of the chapter and to begin learning more about particular jobs.

G. Facts and Numbers

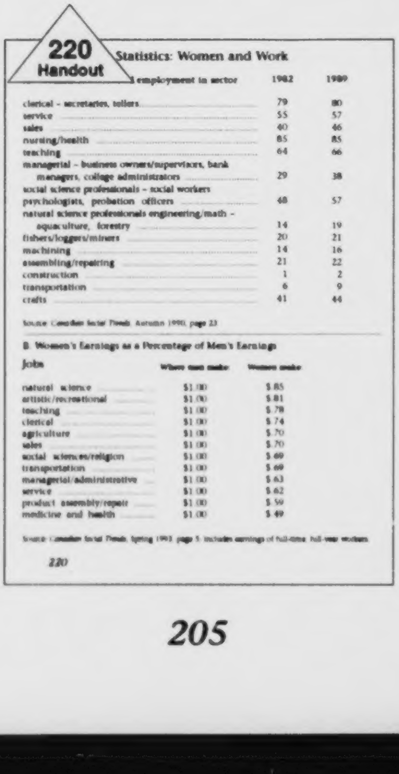
1. Graphing: The work women do

➤ Give learners "Statistics: Women and Work" (page 220), and look at Part A.

➤ Discuss what jobs a person might do in each category.
  - Do you know anyone who does that job?
  - Have you seen any woman doing that job?

➤ Choose five or six of these professions and make a bar graph showing how women's participation has changed.

➤ Make a bar graph showing all the professions for 1989. Put them in order from smallest to largest.



220
Handout

Statistics: Women and Work

employment in sector	1982	1989
clerical – secretaries, tellers	79	80
service	55	57
sales	40	46
nursing/health	85	85
teaching	64	66
managerial – business owners/supervisors, bank managers, college administrators	29	38
social science professionals – social workers psychologists, probation officers	48	57
natural science professionals engineering/math – aquaculture, forestry	14	19
fishers/loggers/miners	20	21
machining	14	16
assembling/repairing	21	22
construction	1	2
transportation	6	9
crafts	41	44

Source: Canadian Social Trends, Autumn 1990, page 23

B. Women's Earnings as a Percentage of Men's Earnings

Jobs	When men make	Women make
natural science	$1.00	$.85
artistic/recreational	$1.00	$.81
teaching	$1.00	$.78
clerical	$1.00	$.74
agriculture	$1.00	$.70
sales	$1.00	$.70
social sciences/religion	$1.00	$.69
transportation	$1.00	$.69
managerial/administrative	$1.00	$.63
service	$1.00	$.62
product assembly/repair	$1.00	$.59
medicine and health	$1.00	$.49

Source: Canadian Social Trends, Spring 1993, page 5. Includes earnings of full-time, full-year workers.

220

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

As an alternative to bar graphs, you could make a chart showing 100 women figures for each category. Ask students to shade in the number that shows the percentage of women in each category.

If your class has worked with percentages, show the professions as part of a pie.

➤ Make a bar graph showing the four sectors with most participation by women and the four sectors with the lowest participation by women.

2. Graphing: Men's and women's earnings

➤ Introduce the idea of proportion expressed as "For every (number) in this category, (number) are in the other category." Use the example of a pair of students who have two and four children, respectively. For every one child A has, B has two. Set up some comparisons of pens or books, for example, for every three pens A has, B has two.
➤ Show the group the figures that compare earnings for men and women in the sales sector (page 220, Part B).
➤ Ask the group to talk about why the discrepancies exist.
➤ Discuss the other categories.
➤ Ask learners to make a bar graph showing these numbers. Learners may choose to graph only some of these figures.

H. Choosing an Occupation

This section may be relevant only to learners who are actually seeking work.

1. Guided discussion

➤ Ask learners to talk about jobs they've done and to think about ways they could do that work for pay and/or to consider other different jobs.
➤ What skills are needed to be a:

secretary
social worker
doctor
bus driver
carpenter
plasterer
fire fighter
electrician
nurse
veterinarian
teacher
cashier
plumber
police officer

➤ Learners can research these occupations by listing the questions they have about them. They may choose to narrow the focus – omitting some of the occupations listed and perhaps adding others. They may wish to work in pairs or small groups to research occupations of particular interest to them.

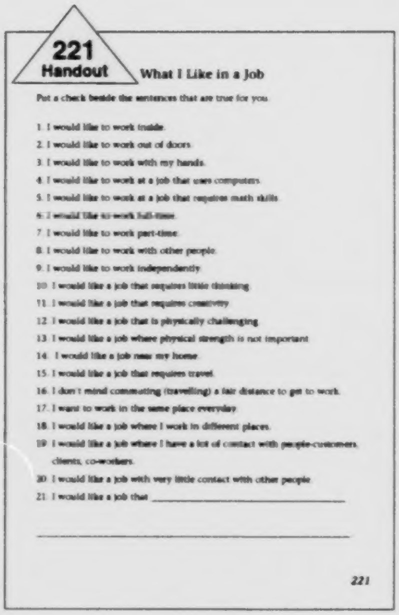
Government publications (pamphlets, especially) might be helpful. As well, the group may wish to invite speakers who work in fields of interest to come to talk about them. Obviously, it will be helpful to invite women who are working in those fields to come to speak to the group. If a woman is not available, after a presentation by a man, it would be interesting to ask the group to discuss how or if a woman might have spoken differently about the job that the speaker described.

This exercise may be done partially or completely at this point. Depending on the interests of the group, it may be easier for learners to simply list occupations and everything they know about the occupations. They can then proceed to the interest inventory before doing additional research, and conduct that research as their interests become more defined and focused.

2. Interest inventory

Once the group has generated a list of occupations and the requisite skills and abilities attached to each, they can begin to think about the ways in which their own skills and interests may or may not match a particular occupation. While the focus of this chapter is to encourage women to consider occupations in the trades, it seems important not to discourage women from exploring any occupation which is of interest to them.

➤ Give learners the interest inventory, "What I Like in a Job" (page 221).
➤ Learners can work alone or in small groups to think about these statements. The aim here is to ask learners to focus on various aspects of daily work in very concrete ways.
➤ Learners can make a large grid on newsprint to gauge their own and others' responses to the statements. They can interview one another, or fill in names of people who respond positively to the statements on the sheet.



221
Handout
What I Like in a Job

Put a check beside the sentences that are true for you.

1. I would like to work inside.
2. I would like to work out of doors.
3. I would like to work with my hands.
4. I would like to work at a job that uses computers.
5. I would like to work at a job that requires math skills.
6. I would like to work full-time.
7. I would like to work part-time.
8. I would like to work with other people.
9. I would like to work independently.
10. I would like a job that requires little thinking.
11. I would like a job that requires creativity.
12. I would like a job that is physically challenging.
13. I would like a job where physical strength is not important.
14. I would like a job near my home.
15. I would like a job that requires travel.
16. I don't mind commuting (travelling) a fair distance to get to work.
17. I want to work in the same place everyday.
18. I would like a job where I work in different places.
19. I would like a job where I have a lot of contact with people-customers, clients, co-workers.
20. I would like a job with very little contact with other people.
21. I would like a job that ______________________

____

221

Statement	Names
1. would like to work inside	Julia, Christine, Paula Anna,
2. would like to work out-of-doors	Christine, Anna, Jade, Sandy, Kitty, Hong
3. would like to work with my hands	Jade, Hong, Patty, Rosa, Ho Sing

➤ Once everyone has discussed the questions, ask learners to write a profile of their own interests and plans for finding work and getting training as necessary.

➤ Once all the profiles are complete, invite learners to discuss their plans with one another. Some questions to consider:

- Is the plan feasible?
- Does it include finding information about the job?
- Does it include finding out about appropriate training courses?
- Does it include finding out about the availability of work in their areas of interest?

Another way of approaching this entire topic may be to ask women in the group about work they know of in their immediate community. Do they know women working in particular jobs? What do they know about those jobs?

The point here is not to discourage women from exploring a particular field of work, but rather to help them remember all the steps necessary for learning about and pursuing opportunities in that field. At the same time, these discussions call for walking the fine line between an optimistic planning for work they would like to do, and the practical realities of the job market.

Resources

(See the Bibliography for complete listings.)

Braid, Kate. *Covering Rough Ground*

Canadian Social Trends

This is a very useful periodical. It is full of interesting statistics on life in Canada, articles that compare the same thing over time, or differences and similarities between provinces, age groups, sexes and so on. It is easier to use than many of the reports put out by Statistics Canada, since it provides some interpretation of them, and often features graphs and charts. The articles, of course, are difficult to read, but the charts and graphs make interesting reading for literacy and EAL students.

English, Betty Lou, *Women at Their Work*

A Newfoundland Spell: Contributions by Students in Basic Education Programs

Stewart, Donna, *Jobstories: I Like the Work; I Like the Money*

Wallerstein, Nina. *Language and Culture in Conflict: Problem-posing in the ESL Classroom*

Wayman,Tom, ed. *Going For Coffee, Poetry on the Job*

Films

9 to 5

Laila

Moving Mountains

Norma Rae

Pretend You're Wearing a Barrel

She's a Railroader

Trade Secrets: Blue Collar Women Speak Out

Working Girl

Audio Tape

Fraser Union with the Industrial Writers' Union. *Split/Shift: Songs and Poems of the Workplace*

Concrete Fever

for Phil Vernon

Seven and one half yards of concrete
and every last pebble in place.
A certain kind of concrete steps
I'd never built before, and
six different patio slopes all having to run
with perfect symmetry
to that one post hole marker
of a drain pipe
and an architect antsy eagle eye for the least mistake
or merely visual flaw.

I worried, I cursed, I adjusted and nailed
and by six o'clock my steps are a grace
to behold, a joy to ascend
and the water from the hoses
of the concrete finisher
rolls sweetly down all those six slopes
and into that bull's-eye drain.
I love water!
I love concrete!
I love the work I did today!

– Kate Braid

From *Covering Rough Ground* by Kate Braid. Polestar Press Ltd., 1011 Commercial Dr., Vancouver, Canada V5L 3X1. Used by permission.

Think Like a Weightlifter, Think Like a Woman

First day on the job and the foreman orders
in a voice like a chainsaw,
Hoist those timbers
by hand to the second floor.
Crane's broken down.

I keep my mouth shut
with difficulty, knowing
how much a six by six timber
twelve feet long and fresh
from the Fraser River, knowing
how much it weighs.

Lorne, my partner, says nothing,
addresses the modest mountain of timbers
towering over our heads, smelling
sweetly nostalgic for forest.

Weighing in with the wood he faces,
with a belly like a great swelling bole,
he shakes off my motion to help and
bends to as if to pick up a penny,
scoops up the timber and packs it, 50 feet,
to lean against the damp grey sides
of the concrete core.
When he doesn't look back,
it's my turn.

And now, because I need this job, and
because it's the first day and because
every eye is watching The Girl,
I bend my knees as the book says,
think like a weightlifter, take the beam
by its middle and order my body
to lift.

Reluctantly, the great tree, sweating pitch,
parts with its peers with a sucking sound,
and the beam and I sway to the designated spot,
I drop it. Repeat.

Alone, I carry beams to Lorne
who alone heaves them with the slightest grunt
to the labourer who bends from the second floor
with a hurry-up call,
Faster! Faster!

No. I will never be a carpenter, I think, never
able to work like these men. Then
Lorne falters.
Without thinking I reach up my two arms beside him
and push with all my might.
The beam flies to the second floor and mindless,
I turn to fetch him another.

Without a word
Lorne follows me back to the pile,
lifts one end and helps me
carry the next timber to the wall.
Without a word we both push it up,
continue this path together
find a rhythm, a pace
that feels more like dancing.

Lorne says, *You walk different.* Yes.
For on this day I am suddenly
much, much stronger, a woman with the strength
of two.

– Kate Braid

From *Covering Rough Ground* by Kate Braid. Published by Polestar Press Ltd., 1011 Commercial Dr., Vancouver, Canada V5L 3X1. Used by permission.

Script: Guided Imagery

Imagine getting up very early one morning in October because you have to leave for work by 7:40. If you have children you have to wash, dress, feed them and get them to the nearby baby sitter. Imagine that all the arrangements are in place and you have done this many times. You must eat something. Do you just have coffee and toast or what? You pack a lunch. You will be eating out of your lunch box. What do you take? Sandwiches? What kind? Fruit? Cookies? Maybe something left over from dinner. You have to fill a thermos with something to drink on the job. What will it be? Do you want some extra fruit or a snack for coffee break? Some days the coffee truck visits the site. Do you have some money? Where will you carry it? There are no purses on site.

You will be working hard out-of-doors in the weather. It's time to get dressed. Warm clothing. If it is rainy you need some layers so only the outer layers get wet. If it is warm you have to decide what you'll strip down to as you get warm. Will you wear just a T-shirt and bra? T-shirt and sweatshirt? How bold are you feeling today? Will you wear the baggy jeans or the ones that fit? How have the men on this job been? Any comments so far? Is this the day for clean clothes or will the dirty ones from yesterday last another day? If it is cold you need a jacket you can work in. Maybe you also take some gloves. Have you got a pair of wool gloves with no fingers or a pair of leather ones? Maybe you think you can manage with no gloves at all. You save your steel-toed work boots to put on as you're leaving the house. You just put a new coat of silicone on them last night so they'll keep you dry. Your hard hat, safety goggles and toolbox are at the site. If you live in rainy country your rain gear is also at the site. Okay, you're ready.

About half an hour later you park near the work site. You are building an apartment building. You are doing form construction which is the same work over and over for each floor. You go to the shack set aside for the carpenters. This is not your first day at this site but it is your first week. You have worked other sites and know a couple of the guys. There are about 20 carpenters altogether. There are also other men from other trades and some labourers. You get your rain gear, hard hat and toolbox.

Other workers are arriving. Some are talking about the game on TV last night or the news. Do you greet them? What do you say? One guy says, "Hi sweetheart." How do you feel? Everyone sits waiting for the time to begin. Some drink their coffee. One guy says, "Tomorrow's the concrete pour, what's the weather forecast?" Various answers are offered. The man you have been assigned to work with shows up. You yawn and he says, "What were YOU doing last night?" How do you feel? Do you answer him? Somebody looks at his watch and says, "Time." People begin to leave.

You go back to the place you were working yesterday. Your partner says, "I'll set up the saw if you'll go get the material." You agree. There isn't a lot of talk. You refer to the foreman's diagrams and comment to each other about what needs to be done.

You don't find the work difficult and you are familiar with all the steps. You enjoy the feeling of being out-of-doors. You feel the wind on your face and since you are now above the ground floor you enjoy the view. When you look up from work you can see the people and cars going by down below.

On the coffee break, your partner asks, "So what made you become a carpenter anyway?" This question has been asked of you many times. What do you say? When you are finished, he just nods. How do you feel?

You carry sheets of plywood to where you and your partner are working, then bring two loads of two by fours. Your body feels good because you are using it. It feels efficient. Your muscles are strong. You enjoy the feel of the hammer in your hand. You like having your tool belt around your waist with everything you need handy. You like the feel and smell of the wood. There's the smell of wet wood when you cut it, the sound when you drive nails. You are feeling whole this morning. Yesterday you successfully built a difficult corner and you made a column, which you had never done before. You are doing work that will last forever. You also feel part of the crew and they seem like a pretty friendly crew. This is work your body likes. Everything seems pretty good.

On the other hand you are especially alert this morning and watchful about the dangers. Just yesterday a guy fell and sprained his ankle badly. There is always danger. When you step backwards you notice where you put your feet. When you pick up the saw you ask yourself, "Where are my fingers?"

Take a moment and imagine the rest of the day. You start to feel tired. You are looking forward to quitting for the day. Maybe you have kids and dinner to deal with when you get home.

Try to imagine yourself that night just before you fall asleep. What are your thoughts and feelings?

It is time to come back to here and now. Take your time. You may want to wiggle your fingers or stretch a little. When you are ready open your eyes. Welcome back.

– Evelyn Battell
(with inspiration and help from Kate Braid)

Bosses' Lament
by Terry Dash

Well I ________ know what to _______ of it, just where it _______ will end
I haven't ______________ so mortified _____________ early ______________
Well I've __________ of war and __________, but things got really __________
When the _____________ at my __________ got hold of ________ cards

CHORUS:

Whatever ___________ we do, _______________ on this earth
When all ________ secretaries ____________ what they ________ worth?

My _________ she ________ the office, you __________ that's what girls do
She does her _________, yes, _________ well, and most of my job, ________
But it's ______________ outrageous, it's _______________ out of line
When she ______________ a salary commensurate _________ mine

CHORUS:

______________ will we _______, whatever on this _________
When _______ the secretaries demand ________ they are worth?

Now my ______________ tallies up the ___________ that I must do
She _________ a list of all my ____________ , so I'll know who is _________

My lord if she __________ leave me, oh how __________ I survive?
I haven't made a __________ call __________1945

CHORUS:

__________ ______ we do, ____________ on __________ earth
When _____ ______ secretaries ____________ what ______ ______ worth?

Now __________ rumours of a ____________, ____________ of a strike
rumours of _____ picket, a ______________ and the like
________ I've _______ my survival __________, in case of _______ and _______.
Here's how I'll get the __________ done, I'll give it to my ____________.

CHORUS:

__________ ________ we _______, whatever _______ ________ __________
__________ all _______ secretaries ____________ __________ they _____ worth?

Well I've had about ____________ of this, I just __________ comprehend
__________ do they think they are to _____________ like men?
Well I ______________ in order, the tried and _____________ norm
I'll damn __________ see her ____________ if I can ______________ the form

CHORUS: (twice)

Vocabulary

Match the words on the left to the definitions on the right. The first word is done for you.

1. mortified
2. famine
3. outrageous
4. salary
5. commensurate
6. tallies
7. survive
8. walkout
9. picket
10. slowdown
11. strife
12. comprehend
13. norm

__13__ usual conditions, normal conditions

_____ bitter conflict

_____ stay alive

_____ understand

_____ a serious shortage of food

_____ workers protesting job conditions, carrying signs outside the workplace explaining their issues

_____ pay, compensation for work

_____ completely unreasonable

_____ workers deliberately slowing down on the job

_____ ashamed, humiliated

_____ adds up, keeps track of

_____ equal to, enough

_____ workers walking out of the workplace to make a protest

Canning Salmon

by Linda Chobotuck (c)1985

The guys on the dock ________ around, __________ the forklift
and ___________ the floor lady till it's ____________ for their tea
They sit at the _____________ by the window that _____________
and they get paid a ______________ more an hour than me

CHORUS:

High is the _______________, low ___________ the pay
long are the ______________, why do ___________ stay?
Somewhere ____________ a _____________ summer slips away
while we're stuck in ______________ canning salmon

The __________________ so loud that we say ___________ gone can-deaf
[The] shift is _____________ over before we can ____________
They keep the noise ___________ just under the _____________
So they don't have to buy us the ___________ ______________ gear

CHORUS

First we __________ spring so ____________ our arms __________
Then we do sockeye __________ we pack ___________ ease
Then we __________ pinks, ____________ mashed up and rotten
So ____________ packed up in pound tins and __________ overseas

CHORUS

Last night we were ____________ for a __________ on the Fraser
So they _________ us on line, ___________ standing around
We ____________ know that ______________ on the river
the boat had ______________ over, two men had _____________

CHORUS:

____________ is the cost, ____________ is the pay
long _________ the ____________ , why _______ we __________?
______________ outside _______ whole ____________ slips ____________
____________ we're _________ in here ______________ _____________

Statistics: Women and Work

A. Women as percentage of total employment in sector

	1982	1989
clerical – secretaries, tellers		
service	79	80
sales	55	57
nursing/health	40	46
teaching	85	85
managerial – business owners/supervisors, bank managers, college administrators	64	66
social science professionals – social workers psychologists, probation officers	29	38
natural science professionals engineering/math – aquaculture, forestry	48	57
fishers/loggers/miners	14	19
machining	20	21
assembling/repairing	14	16
construction	21	22
transportation	1	2
crafts	6	9
	41	44

Source: *Canadian Social Trends*, Autumn 1990, page 23.

B. Women's earnings as a percentage of men's earnings

Jobs	Where men make:	Women make:
natural science	$1.00	$.85
artistic/recreational	$1.00	$.81
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agriculture	$1.00	$.70
sales	$1.00	$.70
social sciences/religion	$1.00	$.69
transportation	$1.00	$.69
managerial/administrative	$1.00	$.63
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product assembly/repair	$1.00	$.59
medicine and health	$1.00	$.49

Source: *Canadian Social Trends*, Spring 1993, page 5; includes earnings of full-time, full-year workers.

What I Like in a Job

Put a check beside the sentences that are true for you.

1. I would like to work inside.
2. I would like to work out-of-doors.
3. I would like to work with my hands.
4. I would like to work at a job that uses computers.
5. I would like to work at a job that requires math skills.
6. I would like to work full-time.
7. I would like to work part-time.
8. I would like to work with other people.
9. I would like to work independently.
10. I would like a job that requires little thinking.
11. I would like a job that requires creativity.
12. I would like a job that is physically challenging.
13. I would like a job where physical strength is not important.
14. I would like a job near my home.
15. I would like a job that requires travel.
16. I don't mind commuting (travelling) a fair distance to get to work.
17. I want to work in the same place everyday.
18. I would like a job where I work in different places.
19. I would like a job where I have a lot of contact with people – customers, clients, co-workers.
20. I would like a job with very little contact with other people.
21. I would like a job that ______________________________

____.

8. Tools for Building Self-Esteem

by Francene Gillis

Francene Gillis is a mother, writer, teacher and community activist who lives in Port Hood, Nova Scotia, with her husband, Sandy, and daughters Mary Alisha and Kimberly Dawn. She is a graduate of Port Hood Consolidated and St. Francis Xavier University. She is a leader in the Nova Scotia literacy movement, and has worked with adults for over fifteen years. Of this project she said, "To be a part of this curriculum is indeed an honour as it gave me the chance to learn from women across the nation. My chapter is on self-esteem because I struggled with self-esteem all my life, as do many who grow up in a rural area."

photo: Bob Martin

Introduction

In an Adult Educational Needs Assessment conducted across twelve rural communities in Inverness County, Nova Scotia in 1989, by Continuing Education, the majority of people stated that the main obstacle holding them back was a lack of self-esteem. This finding was backed by the findings of Kitchen Ceilidhs (informal meetings) put together in 1994 by Mabou Alive – a group of concerned citizens interested in empowering people and rural communities. They too found low self-esteem to be the main problem in rural communities, especially among women, single mothers and seniors.

We can build our self-esteem if we have the right tools. Very often an inability to read and write makes learners feel inferior and their self-esteem suffers. This chapter is designed to help each learner take the tools in relation to the level he or she is at, and use them to accomplish goals, improve reading and writing skills, and ultimately improve self-esteem.

This chapter is designed to provide tools which people can use to increase their self-esteem. Early in the chapter, learners start to put a tool kit together, and the subsequent activities provide tools which can be added to the kit to help strengthen and empower. Although there are tools common to each kit, the tool kits are to be designed on an individual basis in relation to what is relevant and needed by each person. The tool kit will allow women to move ahead in whatever direction they might want to go – to build, achieve and nourish self-esteem, the "who" we are, and want to be. In the first activities we look at what self-esteem is, how it is formed and how self-esteem affects other areas of our lives. The following activities build self-esteem through the formation of tools which validate the individual and what is important to him or her.

In working with people with low self-esteem it is vital that we know some of what it feels like to suffer from a poor self-image. Instructors must be aware that in the very way they teach, they help raise or lower self-esteem. The introductory activities sensitize people in the classroom to the feelings associated with low self-esteem.

A. Introductory Activities

A round is a good way to start any session. It validates feelings and lets everyone get a sense of what's happening with the other people in the group.

1. Warm-up

➤ Ask each participant how they feel by going around the room. This can be done in a number of ways: If you were an animal right now, what animal would you be? If you were a season, what season? A colour, what colour? You can also simply ask them to give an adjective describing how they feel. Be sure to affirm responses and reassure the learners that there are no "wrong" answers.

Our self-esteem is good when we feel validated, when our opinions count, and when we have a voice. Self-esteem is a result of positive messages, successes, and a belief that we count. It can be raised with the proper tools.

2. Brainstorm

➤ Introduce the topic of self-esteem, how we feel about ourselves. Have students brainstorm around the words "self-esteem" and "self-confidence." Allow free-flowing thoughts to come forward and record the answers. Some questions to consider:

- How do you think self-esteem is formed? Self-confidence?
- What factors affect them? What makes them go up or down?

➤ Allow as much discussion as needed, depending on the answers that come out of the brainstorming.
➤ Briefly summarize what was said.

B. The Tool Kit

For each participant you will need a cloth bag, or kit-box, binder, or container large enough to hold the following items: an address book, a lined notebook, a journal book, a small binder with dividers, pen, a photograph, a mirror and a small jar.

You will also need a photo of each student for the concluding activities (H–1). You might take them at intervals throughout the class, or arrange a couple of photo sessions.

The instructor will need the following items as symbols when discussing the kit:

- hammer
- scissors
- stop-watch
- measuring tape or ruler
- mirror
- ribbon
- pillow
- mailbag
- goal jar
- doll
- clown
- dictionary
- resource digest
- medal or certificate
- post-it pad
- a rock

A graphic containing these can be used, but concrete samples bring the concept alive.

1. Introduction

➤ You might say something like, "You are invited to build a tool kit for yourself over the next few weeks. You, more than anyone else, know the things that have worked for you in the past and that will work for you in the future. You are invited to gather together a list of techniques, readings, exercises, musical selections and resources which will enhance your quality of life and your effectiveness. These tools will help you replace old, unwanted patterns and behaviour with new ones."

2. Explain the symbols

➤ This can be done in a brainstorming activity where you ask students, "When we are trying to build self-esteem, what do you think each of these symbols represent?" Expand on each, and give answers as necessary.

- The hammer is used to build self-esteem or to smash away negative thoughts.

- The scissors are used to cut away obstacles and barriers.
- The measuring tape helps measure goals you set for yourself.
- The watch is used to set time limits and to prevent procrastination.
- The mirror is used to practise looking at yourself and being proud of the reflection looking back; also vital for answering the question "Who is important or special?"
- The pillow represents comfort, all you do to alleviate stress, pain, hurt or rejection, such as listening to meditation tapes or music, going for a walk or reading.
- The post-it pad is used to post messages, quotes that give you life, build you up and give you strength.
- The mailbag consists of positive comments and affirmations which are to be taken out and read whenever you are feeling low. These can also be posted! Inspirational or thought-provoking quotes can go in the mailbag.
- The goal jar represents goals you set for yourself and reminds us of how fragile they may be until attained.
- The doll represents positive people who help you feel good about yourself.
- The clown represents the need to laugh at yourself.
- The dictionary represents the personal dictionary each participant will work on throughout the course, as does the resource book. (These are explained further in actual exercises.)
- The medal or certificate celebrates past and daily achievement.
- The rock is to throw when the frustration mounts too high. (It is strongly suggested that the rock be thrown over a raging ocean, in a deep thicket of woods or into a large hay field. If you use your rock, be sure to replenish it, as it is certain to be needed again. As Forrest Gump said, "Sometimes there just aren't enough rocks!")

3. A personal dictionary

➤ Into the tool kit goes a notebook to be used as a personal dictionary for students to keep track of their individual spelling and vocabulary words. Students should be encouraged to look up unfamiliar words they find in their everyday world, and to bring new words to class to challenge their classmates. These words could then be put on the board for the day. Students could be encouraged to find further examples of the use of these words.

4. An address book

➤ Into the kit goes an address book which should contain numbers and addresses for frequently used phone numbers and addresses.
➤ Give instructions and help with using phone books, alphabetization and so on, according to the needs of the students.

Students should be encouraged to take some responsibility for their learning. The student can determine the help needed in relation to vocabulary, comprehension and resources. There should be continual discussion in relation to what is too difficult, too easy or just challenging enough. The activities that follow are designed to suit students at different levels of abilities, so that students can do individualized work when they are having difficulty.

5. A resource book

➤ Into each tool kit goes a small binder in which students can keep important sources of information and help.
➤ Have students gather all the resources they can think of, for example, telephone books, government brochures, etc.
➤ Brainstorm three or four topics which students want more information about.
➤ Break students into three or four groups, according to their interests, and assign a topic to each group. Some questions to consider:

- What do I need to know?
- What do I want to know?
- Where can I get answers?
- What people do we know who have information? What organizations? What books or pamphlets? What TV or radio shows?

➤ Ask them to list sources of information, with relevant phone numbers, etc.

You could bring in community resource directories, available from social workers and other services providers, but usually not available to the general public.

* * *

Students may need help with organizing the information under headings or topics so that they can look up information when they need it.

* * *

As well as copying the information into their own resource book, students might be interested in pooling all the resources they find to produce a small book which could be photocopied for everyone. In this case, be sure to leave lots of blank spaces for students to add new information as it comes along.

* * *

Use these lists to create exercises around public speaking, being more assertive, being a good listener, setting goals, communication skills and so on, according to the interest expressed by the students. (Some of these areas are dealt with in other chapters of this book, and further along in this chapter.)

➤ Ask the group to make a list which can be placed on a wall for others interested in the information.

➤ Share all the posted lists, and allow time for students to record resources and information relevant to them in their personal resource books.

➤ Students might want to do individual exercises in relation to resources they would like included in their kit. Again, invite them to post a list so that they share their information with the group.

6. Making contacts

➤ After organizing their resource books, ask students to look at how they might make contacts.

➤ Set up role plays in relation to making phone calls, going for visits, conducting interviews, inviting guest speakers in.

➤ Ask them to write letters or send faxes. They might share information that comes back through oral presentations or posters.

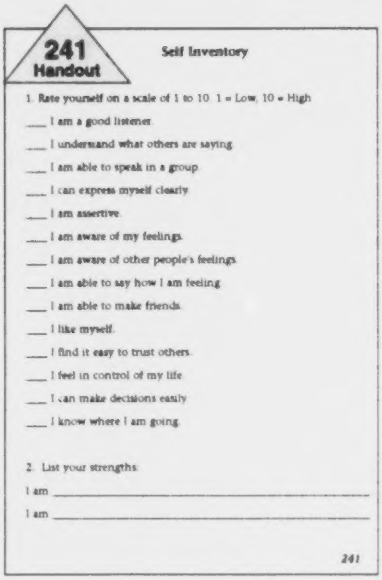
C. Self-Image

Our self-image is the way we see ourselves, based on the messages we have received in the past. Very often society and culture dictate how we should look, dress and act. This pressure can cause us to think we are not as good as someone else when we do not match the images being projected.

1. Self inventory

➤ Ask learners to complete the self inventory (pages 241 – 242). This is to be done in confidence.

➤ Ask them to look at their answers to question 4, "List some things you'd like to get better at," and choose two or three things that they would like to work on in class. Ask them write down these two or three things and hand the list in, with no name attached.



241 Handout

Self Inventory

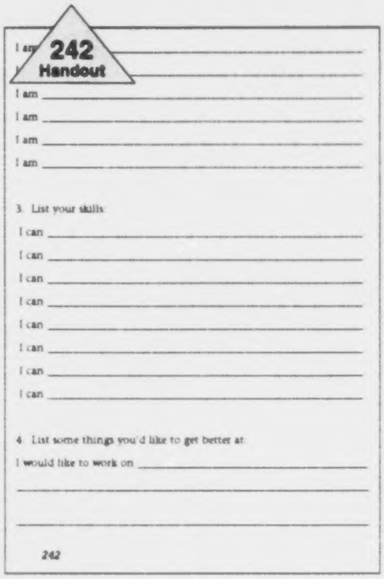
1. Rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 10. 1 = Low, 10 = High

___ I am a good listener.
___ I understand what others are saying.
___ I am able to speak in a group.
___ I can express myself clearly.
___ I am assertive.
___ I am aware of my feelings.
___ I am aware of other people's feelings.
___ I am able to say how I am feeling.
___ I am able to make friends.
___ I like myself.
___ I find it easy to trust others.
___ I feel in control of my life.
___ I can make decisions easily.
___ I know where I am going.

2. List your strengths:

I am ____________________
I am ____________________

241



242 Handout

I am ____________________
I ____________________
I am ____________________
I am ____________________
I am ____________________
I am ____________________

3. List your skills:

I can ____________________
I can ____________________
I can ____________________
I can ____________________
I can ____________________
I can ____________________
I can ____________________
I can ____________________

4. List some things you'd like to get better at:

I would like to work on ____________________
____
____

242

D. Self-Esteem

In general, positive experiences and fulfilling relationships help raise self-esteem. Negative experiences and troubled relationships tend to lower self-esteem. Self-esteem does not remain constant. It changes over time and fluctuates in varying circumstances.

1. Guided discussion

➤ Break students into groups and ask them to discuss the factors, both positive and negative, that affect self-esteem, under the following headings. Assign one heading per group, then have them report back after discussion.

These topics may well bring up hurtful memories, and your students may want to talk about them either during or after class. (See "Responding to Disclosures of Abuse in Women's Lives," page 15.)

- At home: relationships with your partner, parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters and other family members; experiences with family from birth up to present day.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- In school: relationships with classmates, teachers, administrators and counsellors; experiences with school work, extracurricular activities, sports, discipline, etc.
- On the job: relationships with supervisors, co-workers, employees; experiences with hiring, firing, promotions and levels of job responsibilities, as well as your ability to juggle so many roles.
- Social life: relationships with friends, neighbours, boy friends, girl friends; experiences with clubs, sports teams and hobbies.
- In society: relationships with members of different cultures, races and religions; experiences with "standards" and images created by others, for example in the media.

Be creative with this exercise and feel free to expand the ideas and time allotted.

➤ After groups have discussed the topics, ask them to record their responses on a chart and then open discussion to larger group.

➤ Follow-up activities could include:
  - Making collages from magazines representing each of the headings and factors.
  - Take a particular form of media, such as print or music, and do a lesson around the messages sent, and how they can affect self-esteem.
  - Challenge students to do a report on some aspect of self-esteem that hits home to them. For example, they can look at themselves and consider how their self-esteem is affected by the fact that they belong to a particular group or groups, such as women, seniors, single parents, stay-at-home mothers, unemployed, people of colour, people with disabilities, homeless or recently separated.

2. Brainstorm

➤ Brainstorm endings to the sentence "Feeling good about yourself enables you to . . ."

Expect the following: "accept challenges," "enrich your life," "maintain self-confidence," "remain flexible," "be the person you want to be," "enjoy others more fully," "offer more of yourself to the world."

3. List your strengths

➤ Ask students to make two lists, "What I Have" and "What I Can Work With."
➤ Challenge students to look at each of those areas of their lives and to set goals for themselves.

E. Self Talk

Our self esteem is the result of messages we have received from a very young age. Over time we begin to believe those messages and create our self-image. Painful experiences can warp our true image and cause us to have low self-esteem. Building self-esteem involves a willingness to reach for the tools that can help, a willingness to see ourselves and the way we talk to ourselves, and if necessary to change the messages we choose to focus on.

1. Guided discussion

➤ Some questions to consider:
- How do you talk to yourself?
- How many negative comments do you say in the course of a day?
- How many positive?
- Do you dwell on a negative comment when it is made to you?
- Do you distort reality?
- Are you a positive person?

2. Role play

The following activity can be done to help students become aware of the messages they send.

➤ Set up a discussion group with six people, each taking on the behaviour of one of the distortions listed below. Go over all the distortion types first, with lots of examples, so everyone has a good idea of how they work.

- You exaggerate: You think your problems are huge and you have only a tiny ability to solve them. "My whole life is over. I spilled coffee on my homework."
- You always look at the gloomy side: You refuse to see the good things; you remember only the bad things about something that happened. "Sure everything went all right, but I burned the potatoes."
- You think you are the centre of attention, that everyone pays attention to every little thing about you: "Everybody at the party kept looking at me because I lost a button on my shirt."
- You think everything is either perfect or awful: For you there is no in-between. "Either I pass this test or I am a complete failure." "If she doesn't like me a lot, she hates my guts."
- You blow things out of proportion, and you are over dramatic: "I had a fight with Fred. Nobody likes me. I'm losing all my friends. Nothing ever turns out right."
- You jump to conclusions: "She's hasn't come over to say hello to me. I must have done something wrong," or "The doctor hasn't called with my test results. I must really be sick."

➤ On each of six index cards, write out one of the distortion types. Give one card to each person. Introduce the first discussion topic (below), and ask each person to take part in the discussion using the distortion written on the card s/he has. The group might want to put new people in the various roles before going on to a second topic.

➤ Discussion topics:

- People look down on stay-at-home moms.
- Unemployed people don't want to work.

3. Debriefing

➤ Some questions to consider:

- Do you see yourselves in any of the distortions?
- Which ones are most like you?

➤ Go over each distortion type again and brainstorm further comments which would be made by the various types.

Follow this up with a challenge for the students to record, for one week, all the negative and positive comments they hear others say to them, as well as the ones they tell themselves. (It is not necessary to indicate who said them, just record the comment made.) At the end of the week, have students share comments with the class and discuss the outcome. Some students will want to keep their lists confidential.

A project can also be designed around watching television for a week and recording the negative and positive comments. Students might focus on comments about women, seniors, children or some other group, or they might keep a running total on positive and negative comments of all kinds.

Raising self-esteem is a process which is strengthened when the person has success, and feels good about accomplishments, goals achieved or obstacles overcome. Provide such opportunities within your classroom.

F. Role Models

1. Reading

➤ Ask students to go through newspapers and magazines to find stories that make them feel good. Have them bring the clippings into class. Bring in clippings yourself, especially of women who have achieved a long-term goal, overcome an obstacle or raised their self-esteem. Bring in stories that speak of some of the concerns raised by your students during the program.

➤ Over the next number of weeks, read the articles in class. Have students copy words they are unfamiliar with and add them to their personal dictionary. Design comprehension questions around the reading: Who? What? When? Where? How? Why?

In dealing with self-esteem, it often helps for people to read or hear about other people who have gone on to do things they admire.

2. Interviews

➤ Ask students to interview each other for a classroom newspaper article. Ask, "What do you do well?" "What have you done that deserves recognition?"

The point here is to have them realize that recognition is not just for the extraordinary. Let the learners state what has been difficult for them and what they want to be recognized for.

3. Research

See the chapter "Women of Courage: Herstory" for some ideas on how to do this.

➤ Ask students to do a research project on women in Canadian history or women in their province or local area.

4. Writing

There are excellent exercises on this subject in *Growing Bolder* by the Women's Group of Action Read. See also the chapter "Women of Courage: Herstory."

➤ Ask them to write their own history. Allow them freedom to be imaginative, to do this in whatever way they are most comfortable, for example, drawings, photographs, words, song, etc. Let them include whatever information they wish.
➤ On completion of the project, have them add their history to their tool kit.
➤ This might be a good time to give them a mirror for their tool kit – to see themselves as role models in the world.

5. Sharing

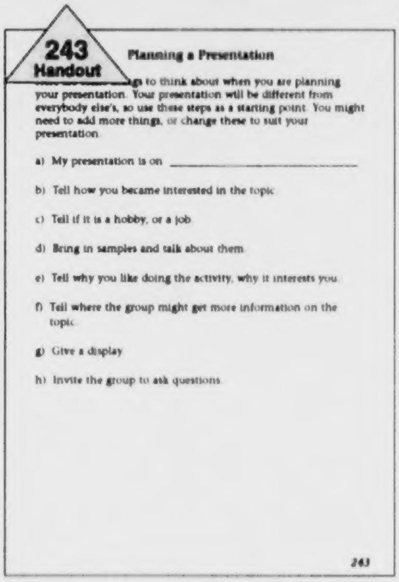
➤ Have the students bring in books or tools that help them in the roles they play.
➤ Ask students to find a partner; each partner should tell the other about the roles they model, about the books or tools s/he has brought, and how and where they are used.
➤ Ask students to tell their partners about volunteer work they are involved in. What do they get from working with others?
➤ Each learner should tell the class about his/her partner.

Often we find it easier to talk about others rather than about ourselves. This exercise will prepare learners for the next presentation where they are asked to speak of their own abilities.

6. Presentation

➤ Ask students to give a presentation which centres on their abilities. If they are good at sewing, they might do an introductory lesson on sewing or some aspect of it; if a carpenter, they can show the steps in building a planter or something else; if an artist or cook, the steps involved from the start to completion of a project.

➤ Students may want to use the outline "Planning a Presentation" (page 243).



243
Handout

Planning a Presentation

gs to think about when you are planning your presentation. Your presentation will be different from everybody else's, so use these steps as a starting point. You might need to add more things, or change these to suit your presentation.

a) My presentation is on ____________________________

b) Tell how you became interested in the topic

c) Tell if it is a hobby, or a job

d) Bring in samples and talk about them

e) Tell why you like doing the activity, why it interests you

f) Tell where the group might get more information on the topic

g) Give a display

h) Invite the group to ask questions

243

The premise behind this activity is the importance of validating and affirming a person's self-worth and what is important to him or her. This activity could be ongoing and done over the course of a number of weeks. If carried out to completion, individuals would not only share a bit of who they are, but in presenting familiar information they would gain confidence in speaking in front of others, and the group would appreciate the information because they would be learning from each other, all of which goes a long way in reinforcing self-esteem.

➤ As a follow-up, invite students to give a short report at the beginning of each day on what they accomplished the previous day. Have them indicate something they want to be recognized for.

Should you run into people who say they are not good at anything, ask them to choose something they wish they were better at.

The instructor should also do a presentation, as it strengthens the concept of equality and models the art of making a presentation.

G. Setting and Achieving Goals

Setting goals and achieving them is one of the best ways of raising self-esteem.

1. Setting goals

➤ Two things go into the tool kit at this point: the goal jar and the measuring tape.
➤ Ask students to go back to some of the previous exercises, and have them determine areas where they would like to set goals.
➤ Ask them to set short-term and long-term goals in relation to their career, their education or their personal life. Make sure they are SMART Goals – specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, tangible.
➤ Some points to consider:

- What situations challenge you?
- What skills do you need to feel more comfortable in those situations? Make it a goal to learn the skills and practise them.
- What do you want to achieve? Make it into a goal.
- What do you have to do to attain your goal? List the steps and record them in your journal. Set a date for the goal to be reached. Make a commitment. Put it in your goal jar.
- Look at the areas in your life where you feel incomplete. Set goals for yourself in those areas.
- Look at the areas where your self-esteem suffers. Set goals for yourself in those areas.

➤ As you achieve your goals, give yourself credit for them, and keep track of them in your tool kit.

2. Sources of inspiration

➤ Have students find quotes which give them strength and courage.
➤ Have them bring the quotes to class to be shared with the others. Put them on the wall.

➤ Invite students to write relevant ones in their personal journals for strength at later times.

H. Concluding Activities

These activities would best be done in a series of activities over the course of the last week. You will need a candle, with matches or lighter, a stack of small papers, a supply of pens, a pillow. For each student, you will need an envelope, a paper cut in the form of a silhouette, a self photograph, two rocks and any other items personally selected for the tool kit.

1. Silhouette

➤ Arrange everyone in a circle. Pass out the paper shaped like a head and shoulders. Ask the students to list on that paper the qualities they most admire in others. On the flip side of the paper have them write the word ME.
➤ While students are doing this, write on flip chart so no one can see until they have finished the exercise: "What you admire most in others, you already possess yourself."
➤ When they are finished, reveal the quote and discuss it.
➤ On the ME side, have students write a letter of commitment to work on goals in specific areas of their choice. Have them list the ways they can help themselves and the tools that will help them. Encourage them to use their tool kit, and add to it as required.
➤ Ask students to put their finished letters in their tool kits.

2. Rock throwing

➤ Review the tool kit designed in the beginning (pages 224 – 225). Mention the pillow for comfort.
➤ Ask the students one by one to indicate any other items they have chosen to put in their tool kit.

Ask them to notice how high and far the rock goes, for with greater effort, they too can go higher and further. There is a link between commitment and effort and what they can do for themselves. They have collected the tools. It is now up to them to use them.

This is important, for you want each student to have several messages. In this way, they'll have a truer picture of what others feel.

➤ Give each of the students a rock; as a group go outside into some far-off corner and one by one throw that rock as far, and high, and hard, as you can.

➤ Go back into class and give each of them another rock to put in their tool kit for when it is needed again.

3. Writing compliments

➤ Make an envelope for each student, with the name on the front.

➤ Give each student a sheet of paper that lists the names of all the group. Section off the names as shown in the illustration, allowing room to write so the sections can be cut apart and put into each student's envelope.

John

Ravinder

Mary

Abe

Lee

Carmen

Alok

➤ Ask each student to write a compliment or positive statement about each person, and to cut the paper so that each section can be put into the envelope with that person's name on it. The envelopes will be sealed, and are not to be opened until the class is over and everyone has gone home.

➤ Check to make sure everyone has finished the notes and put them into the envelopes. Seal them. Mix the envelopes up and give out to the participants, making sure nobody gets their own. Tell them not to reveal whose they have. Ask each, one by one, to deliver the mail to the person whose name is on the envelope, and say something positive about that person as they deliver it.

➤ As a wrap-up, tell them that saying good things about others and practising it on a daily basis will help raise the self-esteem of others and make them feel good about themselves.

This activity takes a fair amount of time, so you may want to invite people to take the papers home, complete them and put them into the appropriate envelopes the next class.

4. Writing a letter

➤ Ask students to write a letter or note to future students who suffer from low self-esteem.

➤ Invite students to tell how they felt, how the new tools helped them, and to offer words of encouragement which might be put into future tool kits.

➤ Ask for permission to use these letters and notes when working with other students, and perhaps in recruiting new students to the program.

5. Closing ceremony

➤ Light the candle and place it inside the circle.

➤ Invite everyone, one by one, to take their photo and add it to their tool kit. Their picture reflects them, thus it completes the kit.

➤ Allow for silence.

➤ Celebrate the achievements of the class by allowing each student in turn to state what he or she got out of the program. Have them do this by taking the candle, making their statement and passing it on to the person beside them.

➤ If possible, give each of them some kind of certificate to add to their tool kit, and on their certificate indicate something about them that is truly special. Perhaps you can list goals achieved during the course, skills attained, abilities discovered.

- Return the candle to the centre of the room.
- All together, blow it out.

Some people may mock the idea of a candle, or the process of leaving. I stress the importance of taking time for the self, to replenish the soul, to quiet the self and be good to the self, because each person matters.

Resources

(See the Bibliography for complete listings.)

Louden, Jennifer. *The Woman's Comfort Book: A Self-Nurturing Guide for Restoring Balance in Your Life*

Moore, Anne and the Women's Group of Action Read. *Growing Bolder: A Workbook on Growing Older and Herstory for Women in Literacy Programs*

Staton, Pat. *Women in Canadian History* (a poster)

Self Inventory

1. Rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 10. 1 = Low, 10 = High

____ I am a good listener.

____ I understand what others are saying.

____ I am able to speak in a group.

____ I can express myself clearly.

____ I am assertive.

____ I am aware of my feelings.

____ I am aware of other people's feelings.

____ I am able to say how I am feeling.

____ I am able to make friends.

____ I like myself.

____ I find it easy to trust others.

____ I feel in control of my life.

____ I can make decisions easily.

____ I know where I am going.

2. List your strengths:

I am ____.

I am ____.

I am ____.

I am ____.

I am ____.

I am ____.

I am ____.

I am ____.

3. List your skills:

I can ____.

I can ____.

I can ____.

I can ____.

I can ____.

I can ____.

I can ____.

I can ____.

4. List some things you'd like to get better at:

I would like to work on ______________________________

____

____.

Planning a Presentation

Here are some things to think about when you are planning your presentation. Your presentation will be different from everybody else's, so use these steps as a starting point. You might need to add more things, or change these to suit your presentation.

a) My presentation is on ________________________________.

b) Tell how you became interested in the topic.

c) Tell if it is a hobby or a job.

d) Bring in samples and talk about them.

e) Tell why you like doing the activity, why it interests you.

f) Tell where the group might get more information on the topic.

g) Give a display.

h) Invite the group to ask questions.

9. Choosing Safer Sex

by Sue Mendel

photo: Moon Joyce

SUE MENDEL has taught daily living skills including literacy, working mostly with women in various residential and community settings, including a community resource centre. Currently she is tutoring one learner. Her curriculum on safer sex developed from working with women to prevent sexually transmitted diseases.

Introduction

It is not always easy or possible for women to choose safer sex. For women, there are close links between sexual health and violence. Inclusive safer sex education for women addresses personal and cultural values and the power dynamics of sex, and it focuses on safety and empowerment. The goals of this chapter are multiple: to help women relax; to learn about safer sex; to explore some options in safer sex; to make informed choices according to their values and circumstances and to practise skills that can help them act on their choices.

Safer sex is a difficult subject. This chapter invites you, as teacher, to speak out more than may be customary, and to encourage values other than your own. It asks you to present a wide range of information, much wider than what learners ask about, so as to teach what they want to know. (Most people do not disclose all that they want to learn about sex.) It encourages you to reach through initial discomfort to achieve a new level of comfort. It asks you to offer a safe distance so that no one feels pressure to disclose personal information, yet asks you to be ready for people to speak personally. You may find it helpful to work with a co-facilitator.

This chapter is written for women only. It is not suitable for mixed groups. Many women will not feel safe in a mixed group because of previous or current violence from men and because mixed groups are culturally inappropriate. Women must be assured of physical and emotional safety. This chapter's focus on women's exploration and empowerment can be dangerous for women who have violent partners, or friends of those partners, in the class. Without safety, women cannot explore the social norms which make choosing safer sex difficult or impossible Again for safety reasons, many women will not be able to take home handouts and pamphlets that you give them during the course of this chapter. Make sure that there is a safe place in the classroom that they can use to store material they do not want to take out of class. Even lockers, if they have them, may not be safe.

The focus on women's empowerment in this chapter is strong, even where not expressly stated. A different approach to power, violence, control and self-awareness needs to be used with men-only or mixed groups.

When women start to talk and read about sex, and feel safe doing so, they may well feel safe enough to talk about past or current sexual violence. Read "Responding to Disclosures of Abuse in Women's Lives" (page 15) to get ready to deal with possible disclosures.

The term "HIV" is generally used in the activities rather than "AIDS," since the emphasis is on preventing infection by the virus rather than describing or treating the disease that results from such infection.

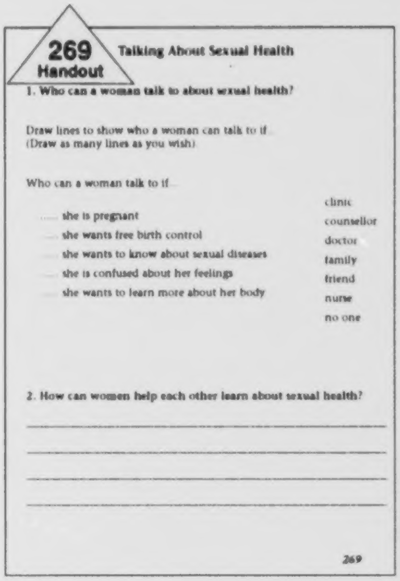
Not much information is given in this chapter about HIV/AIDS since what is printed today may well be out-of-date tomorrow. When you come to use this chapter with learners, the pamphlets referred to here may well have been superceded by others. The activities suggest ways to use available print resources with learners and to incorporate non-print resources into your program.

You will probably want to collect current materials on sexually transmitted diseases before beginning this chapter. Most are available free from local community groups active in AIDS education and advocacy, and from health units, STD clinics and so on. (See Resources on page 266.)

A. Sexual Health

You might begin by asking the group to commit to a shared definition of confidentiality. Confidentiality may mean not discussing what a speaker said except when she is present, or no discussion outside the formal group setting (no gossip or casual conversation). Invite everyone to participate as much as they feel comfortable. If they choose not to discuss or write something, they do not need to explain why.

Then frame sexual health as part of health and ask learners to discuss sexual health. Sexual health is taking care of the sexual parts of our bodies and feeling good about our sexuality, sexual choices and activities.



269 Handout **Talking About Sexual Health**

1. Who can a woman talk to about sexual health?

Draw lines to show who a woman can talk to if...
(Draw as many lines as you wish)

Who can a woman talk to if...

- ...... she is pregnant
- ...... she wants free birth control
- ...... she wants to know about sexual diseases
- ...... she is confused about her feelings
- ...... she wants to learn more about her body

clinic
counsellor
doctor
family
friend
nurse
no one

2. How can women help each other learn about sexual health?

____

____

____

____

269

1. Talking about sexual health

➤ Ask learners to complete "Talking about Sexual Health" (page 269).
➤ Ask them to share what they wish to, and discuss.

2. Labelling diagrams

➤ Ask learners to make their own diagrams (or prepare some for them) of women's bodies, including the sex parts.
➤ Ask learners to label the sex parts, using formal terms which some people use when talking to doctors or nurses.
➤ Ask them to write in other, more informal terms.
➤ Enlarge one drawing for poster-sized classroom use.
➤ A question to consider:
- Which terms do we prefer to use? Why?

Refer to some diagrams of women's bodies. You might look at *Immigrant Women's Health Handbook*, pages 2 – 3, and *Taking Care: A Handbook about Women's Health*, page 227.

Learners can copy the terms, or more advanced learners can write directly onto the activity sheets and check spelling.

Women whose families come from Africa, Malaysia, Indonesia, Yemen and parts of Brazil, Mexico, and Peru may have had clitoridectomies (removal of the skin or tip of the clitoris), excisions (removal of clitoris and the inner labia), or infibulations (removal of the inner and parts of the outer labia, stitching the vulva together to leave a small opening for urine and menstrual blood). Operated women need information about their own bodies, unoperated women's bodies and about their specific health needs. You can say that your drawings are of unoperated women.

For diagrams of operated women's bodies, see "Ritual Female Circumcision and Its effects on Female Sexual Function," by Ruth Brighouse.

B. Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV

Part of sexual health is preventing diseases. Ask learners what they know about sexually transmitted diseases. Clarify that HIV is one sexually transmitted disease of many, and that many sexually transmitted diseases can be cured.

💔 Someone in your group might have HIV, or might love someone who does; present HIV as an illness which can be treated although not cured.

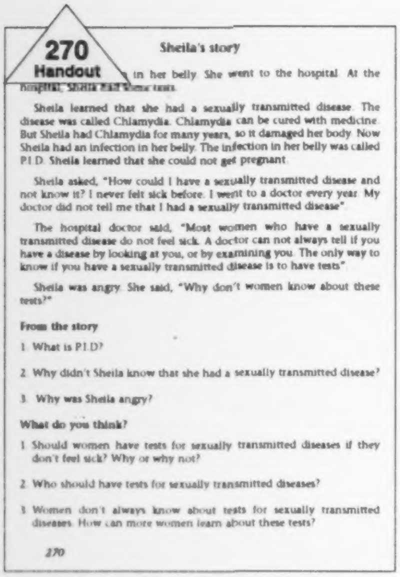
1. Reading: "Sheila's Story"

➤ Read "Sheila's Story" with your learners (page 270).

➤ Ask learners to discuss and write the answers to the questions at the bottom of the page.

➤ Other questions to consider:

- Does everyone with a sexually transmitted disease tell their partner?
- What are some reasons to tell your partner?
- What are some reasons not to tell your partner?



270 Handout

Sheila's story

in her belly. She went to the hospital. At the hospital, Sheila had some tests.

Sheila learned that she had a sexually transmitted disease. The disease was called Chlamydia. Chlamydia can be cured with medicine. But Sheila had Chlamydia for many years, so it damaged her body. Now Sheila had an infection in her belly. The infection in her belly was called P.I.D. Sheila learned that she could not get pregnant.

Sheila asked, "How could I have a sexually transmitted disease and not know it? I never felt sick before. I went to a doctor every year. My doctor did not tell me that I had a sexually transmitted disease".

The hospital doctor said, "Most women who have a sexually transmitted disease do not feel sick. A doctor can not always tell if you have a disease by looking at you, or by examining you. The only way to know if you have a sexually transmitted disease is to have tests".

Sheila was angry. She said, "Why don't women know about these tests?"

From the story

1. What is P.I.D?
2. Why didn't Sheila know that she had a sexually transmitted disease?
3. Why was Sheila angry?

What do you think?

1. Should women have tests for sexually transmitted diseases if they don't feel sick? Why or why not?
2. Who should have tests for sexually transmitted diseases?
3. Women don't always know about tests for sexually transmitted diseases. How can more women learn about these tests?

270

Learners may be interested in doing some wider reading about STDs, for example, *Taking Care: A Handbook about Women's Health*, pages 246 – 247.

2. Make a list of what people know about HIV

➤ Make a list in three columns. In the first column, write everything the group knows about HIV. In the second column, write down where they learned each fact. In the third column, list things the group wants to know.

In the second column, learners may say, "I heard it somewhere." This answer is a good one because it does not request disclosure.

3. Reading: HIV information

This chapter does not supply facts about HIV. I suggest that you use these or other readings and invite a sexual health educator to your group. At the time of going to press, these readings were available and up-to-date. However, you may find more current information to use with your class. Your learners may be interested in reading several different pamphlets, starting with the easier ones.

Learners who have HIV may not know that some doctors specialize in treating patients with HIV, and that medicine for HIV can extend their healthy years and help their babies not get HIV, and that they must tell a doctor that they have HIV to get the treatment that is best for them.

➤ Read and discuss the AIDS issue of *The West Coast Reader* or *English Express*.

➤ Read and discuss page 1 and half of page 2 of the pamphlet "Women and AIDS: Choices for Women in the Age of AIDS."

They are easy to read, newspaper-type factual presentations. You only need to read one of them; they are almost the same publication. If you do not have back issues, the AIDS supplement can be ordered. See "AIDS Education Newspaper" from TESOL in list of pamphlets in Resources (page 266).

This free pamphlet is inclusive, and addresses women's concerns. Although it is hard to read, you can present the information section by section, use the stories, or help learners read and adapt it.

4. Guided discussion

Understanding how HIV is transmitted through body fluids can help learners understand safer sex instructions and evaluate risks for themselves.

➤ Stress that infected body fluids must first get out of one person's body and then get *into* another person's body for her to get HIV.

➤ Look at the diagram of body fluids in the *English Express.*

➤ How can people get other people's body fluids into their bodies? Some questions to consider:

- Which body fluids are passed when people share needles? have intercourse? are born to a mother who has HIV? get a blood transfusion? get a tattoo when needles are not cleaned well? share a straw or rolled-up bill to snort drugs?
- Why do nurses wear latex gloves when giving personal care? Do gloves protect them and you?
- Which body fluids should you keep away from open cuts? (All of them, including blood, semen, vaginal fluids, mucus, urine and feces.)
- If you get only a little infected blood or body fluid into your body, can you get HIV?
- Why don't people get HIV by shaking hands? hugging? using a toilet?

"Caring Safely for People with HIV or AIDS" explains precautions with body fluids.

5. Writing

➤ Ask learners to answer these questions:

- Write three ways people can get HIV.
- Write two or three ways people can protect themselves from HIV.
- How do most women get HIV?

C. Resources

Community resources can offer support, personalized intervention and choices. Learners may not know how to access resources even if they know about them, or may not know how resources can help them. Try to refer learners to local community resources with a safer sex counsellor.

1. Guided discussion

➤ Ask learners where people can get help or learn more about sexually transmitted diseases (either treatment or prevention).

➤ Think about a particular resource, for example, an STD hotline, and answer the following questions about it:

- What does it do? (Gives information, helps locate local resources.)
- Who is this resource for?
- What kinds of questions might people ask when they use it?
- What would it be like to use this resource?
- Do people always get answers to their questions on their first call?
- Why might it take a few calls to find someone they trust?

2. Make and use a resource list

➤ Begin an annotated community resource book using a binder, with separate pages for support groups, health, medical help, affordable leisure activities, etc.

➤ Begin your list with the hotline and other resources the group knows.

➤ Invite learners to expand the list by calling one resource to locate other resources, or by looking up AIDS in the yellow pages.

➤ Later, they might make a subject index and an alphabetical index of resources.

Expanding and updating this resource book can be an ongoing activity.

800 numbers are important resources where confidentiality is an issue or local resources are scarce. (See Resources.)

You might make this book available to men in your class, and list resources for abused women in a separate place.

Learners might want to make a printed version of the resources they find.

➤ Learners can use their resource list to:
  - explore the services offered by a resource or to research a topic of interest;
  - evaluate the resource: what did they like, what could the resource do better, would they recommend this resource to others?
  - write a research report, saying what they did or what they learned.

D. Safer Sex Information

1. Guided discussion

➤ Remind the group that sexual choices are personal; some things that some people do in sex are against other people's religious or moral values. Ask people to be tolerant so that others may feel comfortable about doing something they don't. Reassure learners that they will not be asked to speak about their personal choices. If they choose to do so, ask them to express their beliefs without criticizing others who may be present or absent.

I learned this approach from Ann Paquet.

➤ Discuss the ways HIV has changed everyone. Some questions to consider:
  - In different cultures, how do people date and what is dating?
  - What is the impact of HIV on sexual behaviour in your culture?

➤ Review what people know about safer sex:
  - Where did they learn about safer sex?
  - What is important to know about safer sex?
  - Is safer sex the same for everyone? Or do people make personal choices about safer sex?
  - How do people choose what kind of safer sex is right for them? (Get information, think about risks, get comfortable with the information they want to use.)

2. Guest speaker

A sexual health educator can teach women how to protect themselves and use safer sex supplies in a matter-of-fact way. Afterwards, the supporting activities may seem less confrontational. The speaker can discuss the importance of early medical treatment and encourage women to approach local resources with any concerns. Your women's or community AIDS group might help you find a speaker.

Safer sex is a difficult topic. Since learners may be embarrassed, it may be easier for them and for you if you are not the one who embarrasses them.

Your speaker can name the body parts of men and women and introduce terms such as "intercourse," "oral sex," "anal sex," "sexual touching" and "s/m" so that everyone is clear what the terms mean.

3. Exploring safer sex supplies

Part or all of this activity can be done with your speaker. You or she can bring a box of condoms, dams, latex gloves and lubricants to class.

➤ Bring out the box of condoms:
  - Check that the box says "latex condoms."
  - Check the expiry date on the package.
  - Explain lubricated and non-lubricated condoms. Look for spermicide.
  - Read the instructions together. Are the instructions clear?
  - Stretch a condom to huge proportions to dispel the myth that some men are too big for condoms.
  - Learners can put condoms on their fingers for practice.

➤ Bring out the dams.
  - Read the instructions together. Are the instructions clear?
  - Learners can stretch dams to see how they feel.
  - Make dams by cutting up the condoms you brought to class (using the steps below in the "Dam!" game).
  - Cut up the latex gloves to make dams.

Dental dams can be used for protection from HIV when performing oral sex on a woman. Like condoms, they provide a latex barrier to prevent the spread of the virus.

Some community organizations give free condoms; some college women's groups sell inexpensive safer sex supplies, including dams. You can also buy dams at some specialty sex shops. At press time, the female condom was not available in Canada. If you can, bring some female condoms to class.

The condom insert sheet in *English Express* is an easy-to-read illustrated explanation of condoms, spermicides and condom use.

- ➤ Bring out the lubricant. Read the labels.
- ➤ Some questions to consider:
  - Where can we buy condoms? dams? lubricant? gloves?
  - How much do they cost? (Later, you might make a price list.)
  - Are dams hard to get? Why?
  - Discuss how dams can be made in advance and kept ready.

4. Game: "Condom!"*

To prepare for the game, cut large squares of paper. On each square, in large letters, write one of the steps in the instructions (below) for using a condom. Don't write the numbers on the squares of paper. Make a set of squares for each small group. If you can get some diagrams to go with the instructions, so much the better.

Using a condom (for the game Condom!)

1. Open the package (with your fingers).
2. Put a drop of lubricant in the tip of the condom.
3. Squeeze out the air.
4. Put the condom on the (tip of the) penis.
5. Pull back the foreskin (if uncircumcised, or "uncut").
6. Roll the condom on the penis.
7. Put lubricant on the outside of the condom.
8. Have sex.
9. Hold the base of the condom.
10. Pull out the penis.
11. Take off the condom.
12. Throw the condom in the garbage.

---

*This activity, and activities D-5, F-1, F-2, F-4, F-5, F-6 and F-10 are adapted from The Education/Prevention Workshop for Women on HIV/AIDS, STD's, Sexuality and Self-Esteem, by Centre for AIDS Services Montréal (Women), with permission.

➤ Divide the learners into small groups and give each group a jumbled set of instructions. Each group tries to be first to put their pile of mixed instructions into proper order.
➤ When a group thinks their instructions are in order, they call out, "condom!"
➤ The game continues until a group finds the order.
➤ Go over the instructions together.

5. Game: "Dam!"

This game is played similarly to the previous game, "Condom!" Prepare sets of jumbled squares, using the following instructions for making and using a dam.

Making and using a Dam (for the game Dam!):

1. Use an unlubricated condom
2. Cut off the tip
3. Unroll the condom
4. Cut along one side
5. Put lubricant on one side of the dam.
6. Hold the dam with both hands.
7. Put the lubricant side down on your partner,
8. Stretch the dam over the vulva (sex parts).
9. Have sex.
10. Take off the dam
11. Throw the dam in the garbage.

You might want to play this game in two parts, "making the dam" (numbers 1 – 4) and "using the dam" (numbers 5 – 10).

6. Make a poster

➤ Ask learners to make a poster about how to use and care for condoms. You can check the information with your speaker first.

7. Critical reading: safer sex information.

Try to use "Women and AIDS: Choices for Women in the Age of AIDS."

➤ Read with the group one or two or more pamphlets on safer sex. Look at them critically. Discuss them, in these four areas:

Who does this pamphlet talk to?

- Does the pamphlet talk more about men or women?
- Does it talk about all women? lesbians? straight women? women of different races? different ages? differently abled women?
- Who don't we see or read about?
- Does the pamphlet talk to you?
- Does the pamphlet say clearly who it talks to? Do you have to guess?
- Does it talk to the people it says it does?

What does this pamphlet say about safer sex?

- What safer sex acts does the pamphlet explain?
- Does it explain different ways you can choose to protect yourself? Or just one way?
- Is the information clear?
- Does it explain how to protect yourself from one sexually transmitted disease, or many?
- Does it tell women who have HIV, and women who don't have HIV, ways to protect themselves?
- Does it discuss what makes safer sex hard and what to do about this?

What does this pamphlet leave out?

- What diseases does this pamphlet not discuss?
- What safer sex acts does this pamphlet not explain?
- Does it explain different ways that you can choose to protect yourself during intercourse? during oral sex? sexual touching? sharing sex toys? during s/m?
- Does the pamphlet say where we can learn more?

What are the effects of leaving information out? (For example, we might think that what it leaves out is safe, or we might think there is nowhere to go to learn more?)

E. Safer Sex: Making Choices

Reassure the group that they will not be asked to talk about their personal choices.

1. Writing

➤ Make a list of different ways a woman can protect herself and her partner.

➤ Make a poster-sized list in seven columns, with these headings:

- intercourse
- anal intercourse
- she gives a man oral sex
- her partner gives her oral sex
- sharing sex toys
- sexual touching
- s/m

➤ Divide each column into two rows; label them "Risks" and "Protection."

➤ List the risks for each category of sexual activity.

➤ List different ways that a woman can protect herself during each sexual activity.

➤ Discuss which choices are safer. Rank them from safest to least safe.

➤ Check your information with your speaker and an STD clinic.

➤ Rewrite your chart so that each column has the safest choices on top.

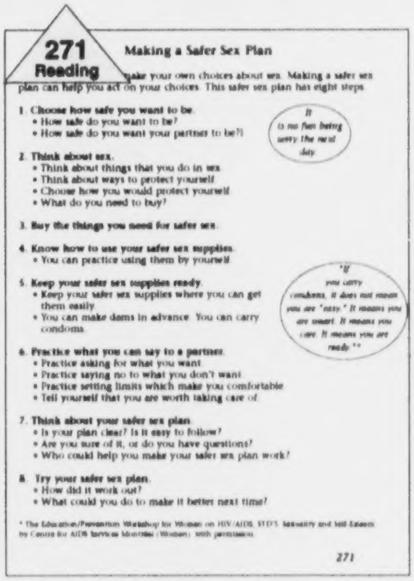
2. Guided discussion

➤ Who is responsible for safer sex? Some questions to consider:

- Who should carry condoms, the woman or the man? Why?
- What are the benefits of taking responsibility for safer sex and planning safer sex in advance?

Your group might want to print their poster to share with others, or write a pamphlet on safer sex.

You will find the information necessary to fill in the chart in "Women and AIDS: Choices for Women in the Age of AIDS," pages 1 and 4. "Making Connections: A Booklet about Women and Prescription Drugs and Alcohol" might be helpful. Some categories on your chart may have very little information. The information is available but may be hard to access. Ask your speaker and STD clinic about risks and precautions for safe sexual touching. Refer your learners to the pamphlet "Safe S/M: Advice on AIDS Prevention."



271
Reading

Making a Safer Sex Plan

ake your own choices about sex. Making a safer sex plan can help you act on your choices. This safer sex plan has eight steps.

1. **Choose how safe you want to be.**
   - How safe do you want to be?
   - How safe do you want your partner to be?
2. **Think about sex.**
   - Think about things that you do in sex
   - Think about ways to protect yourself
   - Choose how you would protect yourself
   - What do you need to buy?
3. **Buy the things you need for safer sex.**
4. **Know how to use your safer sex supplies.**
   - You can practice using them by yourself
5. **Keep your safer sex supplies ready.**
   - Keep your safer sex supplies where you can get them easily
   - You can make dams in advance. You can carry condoms
6. **Practice what you can say to a partner.**
   - Practice asking for what you want
   - Practice saying no to what you don't want
   - Practice setting limits which make you comfortable
   - Tell yourself that you are worth taking care of
7. **Think about your safer sex plan.**
   - Is your plan clear? Is it easy to follow?
   - Are you sure of it, or do you have questions?
   - Who could help you make your safer sex plan work?
8. **Try your safer sex plan.**
   - How did it work out?
   - What could you do to make it better next time?

It is no fun being sorry the next day

*"If you carry condoms, it does not mean you are "easy." It means you are smart. It means you care. It means you are ready."**

* The Education/Prevention Workshop for Women on HIV/AIDS, STD'S, Sexuality and Self-Esteem by Centre for AIDS Services Montréal (Women), with permission.

271

3. Making a safer sex plan (a silent activity)

➤ Give learners a copy of "Making a Safer Sex Plan" (page 271).
➤ Explain that this is a silent activity because you are asking them to think about their personal choices in safer sex. If they choose to write, no one will read what they write, unless they request it.
➤ Read each step together, giving learners time to come to silent answers.

F. Overcoming Barriers to Safer Sex

Consider what you might do to help women feel safe, without asking whether violence has been a problem. You can be flexible and sensitive to the group, and be ready to stop or change direction. You can allow for personal speech as well as more distance in discussions; after someone speaks personally, you might bring the conversation back to "how else can a woman . . . " Much of this chapter explores barriers to safer sex with men, so it is important to try to include lesbian experience.

1. Media analysis

➤ Bring some magazines or pictures of a woman and a man relating together in social situations.
➤ Learners can work in pairs to select a photo, discuss the following questions, and present their photo and analysis to the group.
➤ Questions for partner pairs:

- Would the woman in this picture ask the man to use a condom? What would she say? What would he say? Would they use a condom?
- Would the man in this picture tell the woman he wanted to use a condom? What would he say? What would she say? Would they use a condom?

➤ After each pair has presented a photo, ask the group to discuss these questions:
  - Do women want safer sex than their partners do?
  - Are we influenced by the magazines we read? How?
  - Are we influenced by TV and the movies? How?

If this discussion moves into "How can women get men to use condoms?" you can say that lesbians may also have problems negotiating safer sex.

2. Guided discussion

Even when women know the risks and know how to protect themselves, there are many reasons why they do not practise safer sex. Many things can make it hard for women to choose safer sex. Ask your group to list reason why safer sex is hard for many women, and then to discuss what women can do about this.

➤ Make two lists.
➤ On the first list, write down what can make it hard for women to choose safer sex.
➤ At the bottom of this list, write down what makes it impossible for women to choose safer sex.
➤ On the second list, write down what can make it easier for women to choose safer sex.
➤ Some questions to consider:
  - What can make it hard for women to choose safer sex? (Not believing women or lesbians are at risk; not being prepared; afraid to be seen as "easy" if they use or carry condoms; hard to talk to partner or initiate sex; embarrassed to talk about sex; in her culture, women don't talk about this; partner does not like her to discuss this; partner or peer pressure; partner won't listen or tries to talk her out of her feelings; says she doesn't care about or trust him; safer sex implies partner is "unclean"; housebound women rely on partners to shop; women rely on men to use male condoms; the desire to get pregnant; losing control due to substance/alcohol use or desire; forced sex; economic dependence and poverty; partner unfaithful.)

This discussion may be very difficult for some women. If it is hard to get discussion going, you might want to give these reasons one at a time and ask women to imagine situations where this might be true.

- What can make it easier for women to choose safer sex? (Partner knows about safer sex; wants safer sex; they trust each other; they talk about making sex safer; partner wants her to feel safe during sex, listens to and doesn't try to change how she feels; people are prepared; had good sexual experiences before.)
- What are some solutions to the barriers to safer sex? (Separate safer sex education for women and men; safer sex education in media; affordable female condoms; support groups to help women work out safer sex; safer sex plans; talk with partner before having sex; think about substance use; work on self-esteem; work to end violence.)

3. Reading: "Safety and Sex"

This is a great pamphlet for more advanced learners.

➤ Read and discuss the ideas for working out safety with a male partner, from the pamphlet "Safety and Sex: some comforting safer sex info for women who have sex with men."

4. Practising skills: Asking for safer sex

➤ Give learners a copy of "The assertive way to ask and say no" (page 272).
➤ Demonstrate different ways to use the four steps of assertive asking.
➤ Read each step separately, asking learners to give examples of the step.
➤ Then put the steps together. For example:

① "I'm worried about HIV."
② "I want to have sex with you if we [use a condom]."
③ "If you don't want to [use a condom], is there anything else we can do in sex? How about [touching each other]?"
④ "Okay . . . shall we go for a walk?"

➤ Ask learners to try the four steps of assertive asking in partner pairs.

➤ If some partner pairs are finished before others, you can invite learners to repeat the activity differently, or to ask for something else (for example, to use a dam for oral sex).

➤ Ask if any learners want to present their work to the group, and discuss. Some questions to consider:

- Should women always be assertive?
- Is it always safe to be assertive? When is it not safe?
- How can women act assertively about safer sex without asking for safer sex?

5. Practising skills: Saying no

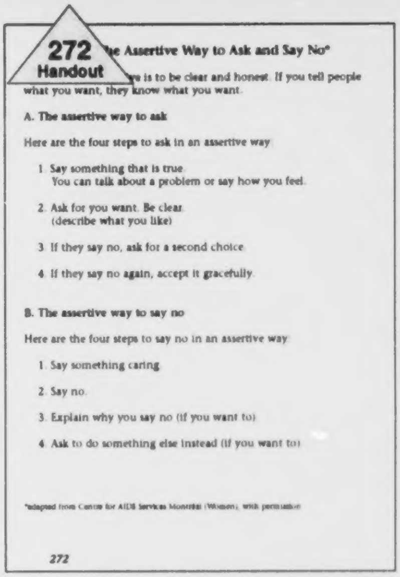
➤ Using the four steps to assertive saying no, practise refusing unsafe sex.

➤ You can repeat the format you used for the section on assertive asking (E–3, above). For example:

① "I really like you."
② "I won't have sex unless we use a condom."
③ "I want to protect both of us."
④ "Let's think about it for a while and talk again."

➤ Some questions to consider:

- What happens if someone assertively asks for safer sex, but the other person assertively says no, they want unsafe sex? Who sets the limit on how close they will be?
- Does one person have to do what the other person wants? (No.)
- Do they have to have unsafe sex? (No.)
- If they can't agree on what kind of sex they will have, what happens? (They do not have to have sex.)



272
Handout

he Assertive Way to Ask and Say No*

ve is to be clear and honest. If you tell people what you want, they know what you want.

A. The assertive way to ask

Here are the four steps to ask in an assertive way:

1. Say something that is true.
   You can talk about a problem or say how you feel.
2. Ask for you want. Be clear.
   (describe what you like)
3. If they say no, ask for a second choice.
4. If they say no again, accept it gracefully.

B. The assertive way to say no

Here are the four steps to say no in an assertive way:

1. Say something caring.
2. Say no.
3. Explain why you say no (if you want to).
4. Ask to do something else instead (if you want to).

*adapted from Centre for AIDS Services Montréal (Women), with permission

272

Learners might ask for a date to see a movie. This can help women relax and practise the steps of assertive asking. Then learners can ask for something related to sex (for example, to use a condom).

For suggestions on different ways to be assertive, see *The Education/Prevention Workshop for Women on HIV/AIDS, STDs, Sexuality and Self-Esteem*, by Centre for AIDS Services Montréal (Women).

6. Role play

➤ Ask the group do so some role plays of assertive asking and assertive saying no.

➤ You can rehearse the role play in a group: Divide your group into two groups and assign roles. Each group discusses their role. Group #1 says the first statement of an assertive request. Group #2 gives an assertive refusal. Use each of the four steps. Then the groups can change roles.

➤ Ask the group to role play in partner pairs. (Offer the option of being an observer instead of participating.) Before you begin, plan what a woman will do if she can not think of an assertive "no" statement. You might suggest, "I can't explain it to you, but I can't do that; it doesn't feel right for me."

➤ Some suggestions for roles:
- A asks for a date; B refuses.
- A asks to use a condom; B refuses;
- A asks for sex without a condom; B refuses.

➤ Discuss how participants and observers felt during the role plays.

You can use assertive asking and saying no, as well as role playing, in many ways. Learners can ask to use a dam or a condom for oral sex, to have only sexual touching, that their limits in sex be respected, or ask not to have sex.

7. Writing

➤ Read a Bill of Rights.

➤ Ask questions to help learners identify sexual rights.
- Do people have a right to their feelings? choices? limits? to change their minds?
- Do they have to explain?
- Should they be pressured?
- Do people have the right to help if they need it?
- Does a woman "owe" a man sex?

➤ Make a Sexual Bill of Rights, either individually or together.

There are many sources: *Education/ Prevention Workshop for Women on HIV/AIDS, STDs, Sexuality and Self-esteem; Taking Care;*, or *Isolating the Barriers and Strategies for Prevention: A Kit about Violence and Women's Education for Adult Educators and Adult Learners.* Also see "Choices for Women in the Age of AIDS."

A Bill of Rights can be a positive way to deal with a difficult subject.

8. Case study 1: Pressure

These two case studies (E–8 and E–9) invite learners to distinguish between pressure and force. The discussion about the case studies may lead women to disclose violence in their lives.

➤ Present this case study: When Matthew and Linda had gone out for awhile, Matt said, ① "We don't need condoms any more. ② "Trust me." ③ "I'm clean." ④ "If you don't trust me it means I can't trust you." He was angry as he said the last sentence. Linda is afraid that Matt will leave her if she doesn't do what he wants. She doesn't want to be alone.

➤ Some questions to consider:

- How are each of Matt's four statements pressure?
- Does he makes it hard for Linda to disagree? How?
- Does he try to get Linda to change or ignore her feelings? How?
- Does he let Linda think he might leave her? How?
- If Linda gives in to pressure, is she responsible if she gets HIV or another STD?
- What choices can Linda make?
- Where could Linda get support to choose safer sex? (Safer sex/STD counsellor.)
- If Linda lived here, where could she find a safer sex counsellor?

9. Case study 2: Force

➤ Present this case study: Carla learned that Bob had unsafe sex before, so she asked Bob to have an HIV test. "Are you saying I have AIDS? You're crazy! I'm healthy! Don't ever talk about this again," he said, raising his fist. "Or you'll be sorry."

➤ Some questions to consider:

- Would it be safe for Carla to talk about condoms?
- If it isn't safe to be assertive, should women be assertive? (No.) What can a woman do instead?
- What is the difference between pressure and force? What is force?
- Might Carla decide that worrying about HIV is not her main problem now? Why or why not?

- Is Carla responsible if she or her baby gets HIV or other diseases? (No.) Why is it not her fault?
- How could a counsellor for safer sex help Carla?
- Where else could Carla go for help?
- Is forced sex unsafe sex?

10. Practise assertive responses to pressure

How do you decide if it is a pressure statement? You might ask, "Does it make the woman feel uncomfortable, or that her needs are not important, or that there is something wrong with her request?"

The more statements there are on the list, the easier it is to identify pressure statements.

➤ List things a man might say when he does not want to use a condom.
➤ Decide which ones are pressure statements, and put a star beside them..
➤ Examples of pressure statements:

- Sex isn't unsafe because I love you.
- If you really like me, you'd . . .
- We can't afford condoms.
- You're selfish.
- I want to go natural.
- I'll put it on soon; don't worry.

See also "Women and AIDS: Choices for Women in the Age of AIDS," page 6.

➤ Review the parts of an assertive response (page 272).
➤ Reply to one pressure statement at a time, giving an assertive response. For example:

- You don't like me. (I do like you; I want to protect us both.)
- I had a test. (Were you tested for all STDs? Let's have safer sex until we see a counsellor.)

➤ Discuss what makes it hard for a woman to respond assertively to pressure.
➤ You can role play pressure statements and responses in the large group or in partner pairs.

11. Group exercise: setting limits

➤ Learners negotiate their boundaries with each other. Explain the exercise and ask one partner pair to begin. One person stands still and the other walks towards her, beginning 20 feet away if possible. The rest of the group observes. (This can help the pair feel safe – it is public).

- The walker walks slowly towards the standing person.
- The stander must tell the walker when to stop, or back up, and how close she wants the walker to be. If she is silent, the walker continues walking.
- At any time the walker may stop, and say, "This is where I want to stop." She may stand there a while, choose to go closer if invited, or back up.
- The distance between the two people is always established by the person who wants to be furthest away.
- After the partners have negotiated a distance, the pair changes roles.

➤ When all have participated who want to, ask participants and observers to share what they wish to and discuss the experience. Some questions to consider:

- What did you find easy or hard about the exercise?
- Ask questions to help learners make links between this and setting other boundaries.

I learned this exercise from a college leadership-training course with Ron Witort.

12. Reading: "What Do You Think?"

➤ Ask learners to complete "What do you think?" (page 273), which identifies skills and behaviours needed for safer sex choices and asks where women can practise these skills.

➤ Invite learners to share and discuss their answers.

273
Handout

What do you think?*

nts to talk to her partner about safer sex, there are many things to pay attention to. Put a tick beside the things that a woman needs to do when she talks about safer sex with her partner.

___ speak up
___ ask his sex history
___ ask to use a condom
___ say how she feels
___ be clear
___ know she has a right to feel that way
___ say what she needs to feel comfortable
___ carry condoms
___ learn to say no
___ show him she respects him
___ wait to get to know him first
___ talk to her partner before having sex
___ feel good about herself
___ feel comfortable talking about sex
___ know different things to do in sex besides intercourse
___ work out boundaries
___ be firm
___ be able to say no, and mean it

2. How can a woman learn more about how to work out safer sex? Put a tick beside the ways a woman can learn more.

___ talk to friends
___ talk to people in her family
___ talk to a counsellor
___ talk to her partner
___ talk to her children
___ talk to a doctor
___ read about safer sex
___ go to workshops

___ watch TV
___ listen to the radio
___ watch movies
___ think about safer sex
___ learn more about how she feels
___ learn to say no

*adapted from Centre for AIDS Services Montréal (Women) with permission

273

Resources

(See the Bibliography for complete listings.)

Books and publications

Mary J. Breen. *Taking Care: A Handbook about Women's Health*

Brighouse, Ruth. "Ritual Female Circumcision and Its Effects on Female Sexual Function" in the *Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality* Vol I (1) Spring 1992

Canadian AIDS Society. *Safer Sex Guidelines: Healthy Sexuality and HIV: A Resource Guide for Educators and Counsellors*

Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women. *Isolating the Barriers and Strategies for Prevention: A Kit about Violence and Women's Education for Adult Educators and Adult Learners*

Centre for AIDS Services Montréal (Women). *Education/Prevention Workshop for Women on HIV/AIDS, STDs, Sexuality and Self-Esteem.* 1994.

Health Canada, Division of STD Control. *Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education*

Health and Welfare Canada. *Women and AIDS: A Challenge for Canada in the Nineties: A Framework for AIDS Education Programs,* DSS Cat. #H43-53/20

Immigrant Women's Health Centre. *Immigrant Women's Health Handbook* (published in many languages)

Rudd, Andrea and Darien Taylor, eds. *Positive Women: Voices of Women Living with AIDS*

Women and Health, prepared by Patricia Smyke

The Westcoast Reader, AIDS Issue

Pamphlets

"AIDS Education Newspaper."
TESOL Central Office,
1600 Cameron Street, Suite 300,
Alexandria, Virginia, 22314-2751.
Tel: (703) 518-2522. Fax (703) 836-7864.

"Black Women . . . What's Happening With You and AIDS?"
Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention (BLACK C.A.P.)
597 Parliament Street, Suite #103,
Toronto, Ontario M4X 1W3;
Tel: (416) 926-0122. Fax: (416) 926-0281

"Caring Safely for People with HIV or AIDS." Canadian Public Health Association, Health Canada

"Women Who Have Sex with Women."
Women's Program/AIDS Vancouver,
1107 Seymour Street,
Vancouver, BC V6B 5S8
Tel: (604) 681-2122. Fax: (604) 893-2211;
with the participation of: AIDS Calgary (403) 228-0161 and The AIDS Committee of Toronto (416) 340-8122

"Making Connections: A Booklet about Women and Prescription Drugs and Alcohol."
Action on Women's Addictions, Research and Education (AWARE),
P.O. Box 86,
Kingston, Ontario K7L 4V6
Te: (613) 545-0117. Fax: (613) 545-1508

"Safety and sex: some comforting safer sex info for women who have sex with men"
Women's Project / Comitè E.L.L.E.S.
207 Queen Street, 4th floor,
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6E5
Tel: (613) 238-5014. Fax: (613) 238-3425

"Safe S/M: Advice on AIDS Prevention."
AIDS Committee of Toronto,
Safer S/M Education Project.
399 Church Street,
Toronto, Ontario M5P 2J6
Tel: (416) 340-2437

"Hey Girl! What Prostitutes Need to Know about the AIDS Test."
The Prostitutes' Safe Sex Project,
Box 1143, Station F,
Toronto, Ontario M4Y 2T8
Tel: (416) 964-0150

"Positive Sexuality."
Voices of Positive Women,
P.O. Box 471, Station C,
Toronto, Ontario M6J 3P5,
Tel: (416) 324-8703

"Women and AIDS: Choices for Women in the Age of AIDS."
revised by Canadian Public Health Association 1995
For copies contact: National AIDS Clearinghouse,
1565 Carling Ave, Suite 400,
Ottawa, Ontario, K1Z 8R1,
Tel: (613)725-3434. Fax (613)725-9826

Useful Contacts

Deaf Outreach Project,
AIDS Committee of Toronto,
399 Church Street,
Toronto, Ontario M5P 2J6
TTY: (416) 340-8122. Tel: (416) 340-2437

National AIDS Clearinghouse,
1565 Carling Ave, Suite 400,
Ottawa, Ontario, K1Z 8R1,
Tel: (613)725-3434; Fax: (613)725-9826. (Ask for their catalogue)

SIECCAN (The Sexual Information and Education Council of Canada),
850 Coxwell Avenue,
East York, Ontario M4C 5R1
Tel:(416) 466-5304. Fax: (416) 778-0785

Provincial STD or AIDS Hot Lines

Alberta (800)772-2437
British Columbia (800)661-4337
Manitoba (800)782-2437
New Brunswick (800)561-4009
Newfoundland (800)563-1575
Northwest Territories (800)661-0795
Nova Scotia (800)566-2437
Ontario (800)668-2437
Quebec (800)463-5656
Saskatchewan (800)667-6876
Yukon (800)661-0507

For other telephone information lines in your area, look under "AIDS" in your phone book.

Talking about Sexual Health

1. Who can a woman talk to about sexual health?

Draw lines to show who a woman can talk to if . . .
(Draw as many lines as you wish).

Who can a woman talk to if . . .

she is pregnant
she wants free birth control
she wants to know about sexual diseases
she is confused about her feelings
she wants to learn more about her body

clinic
counsellor
doctor
family
friend
nurse
no one

2. How can women help each other learn about sexual health?

____

____

____

____

Sheila's Story

Sheila had a pain in her belly. She went to the hospital. At the hospital, Sheila had some tests.

Sheila learned that she had a sexually transmitted disease. The disease was called chlamydia. Chlamydia can be cured with medicine. But Sheila had chlamydia for many years, so it damaged her body. Now Sheila had an infection in her belly. The infection in her belly was called P.I.D. Sheila learned that she could not get pregnant.

Sheila asked, "How could I have a sexually transmitted disease and not know it? I never felt sick before. I went to a doctor every year. My doctor did not tell me that I had a sexually transmitted disease".

The hospital doctor said, "Most women who have a sexually transmitted disease do not feel sick. A doctor cannot always tell if you have a disease by looking at you, or by examining you. The only way to know if you have a sexually transmitted disease is to have tests".

Sheila was angry. She said, "Why don't women know about these tests?"

From the story:

1. What is P.I.D?

2. Why didn't Sheila know that she had a sexually transmitted disease?

3. Why was Sheila angry?

What do you think?

1. Should women have tests for sexually transmitted diseases if they don't feel sick? Why or why not?

2. Who should have tests for sexually transmitted diseases?

3. Women don't always know about tests for sexually transmitted diseases. How can more women learn about these tests?

Making a Safer Sex Plan

You have the right to make your own choices about sex. Making a safer sex plan can help you act on your choices. This safer sex plan has eight steps.

1. **Choose how safe you want to be.**
    - How safe do you want to be?
    - How safe do you want your partner to be?I

It is no fun being sorry the next day.

2. **Think about sex.**
    - Think about things that you do in sex.
    - Think about ways to protect yourself.
    - Choose how you would protect yourself.
    - What do you need to buy?

3. **Buy the things you need for safer sex.**

4. **Know how to use your safer sex supplies.**
    - You can practise using them by yourself.

5. **Keep your safer sex supplies ready.**
    - Keep your safer sex supplies where you can get them easily.
    - You can make dams in advance. You can carry condoms.

"If you carry condoms, it does not mean you are "easy." It means you are smart. It means you care. It means you are ready."

6. **Practise what you can say to a partner.**
    - Practise asking for what you want.
    - Practise saying no to what you don't want.
    - Practise setting limits which make you comfortable.
    - Tell yourself that you are worth taking care of.

7. **Think about your safer sex plan.**
    - Is your plan clear? Is it easy to follow?
    - Are you sure of it, or do you have questions?
    - Who could help you make your safer sex plan work?

8. **Try your safer sex plan.**
    - How did it work out?
    - What could you do to make it better next time?

From The Education/Prevention Workshop for Women on HIV/AIDS, STDs, Sexuality and Self-Esteem, by Centre for AIDS Services Montréal (Women), with permission.

The Assertive Way to Ask and Say No

The way to be assertive is to be clear and honest. If you tell people what you want, they know what you want.

A. The assertive way to ask

Here are the four steps to ask in an assertive way:

1. Say something that is true.
   You can talk about a problem or say how you feel.

2. Ask for what you want. Be clear.
   (describe what you like)

3. If they say no, ask for a second choice.

4. If they say no again, accept it gracefully.

B. The assertive way to say no

Here are the four steps to say no in an assertive way:

1. Say something caring.

2. Say no.

3. Explain why you say no (if you want to).

4. Ask to do something else instead (if you want to).

Adapted from Centre for AIDS Services Montréal (Women), with permission.

What Do You Think?

1. When a woman wants to talk to her partner about safer sex, there are many things to pay attention to. Put a tick beside the things that a woman needs to do when she talks about safer sex with her partner.

___ speak up
___ ask his sex history
___ ask to use a condom
___ say how she feels
___ be clear
___ know she has a right to feel that way
___ say what she needs to feel comfortable
___ carry condoms
___ learn to say no
___ show him she respects him
___ wait to get to know him first
___ talk to her partner before having sex
___ feel good about herself
___ feel comfortable talking about sex
___ know different things to do in sex besides intercourse
___ work out boundaries
___ be firm
___ be able to say no, and mean it

2. How can a woman learn more about how to work out safer sex? Put a tick beside the ways a woman can learn more.

___ talk to friends
___ talk to people in her family
___ talk to a counsellor
___ talk to her partner
___ talk to her children
___ talk to a doctor
___ read about safer sex
___ go to workshops
___ watch TV
___ listen to the radio
___ watch movies
___ think about safer sex
___ learn more about how she feels
___ learn to say no

Adapted from Centre for AIDS Services Montréal (Women), with permission.

10. Songs about Women's Issues

by Dharini Abeysekera

Dharini Abeysekera began teaching English as an Additional Language to children in 1975. From 1981 to 1989 she co-ordinated the Intensive English Program for university freshmen at the University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka. From 1990 to the present Dharini has been working at the Toronto ALFA Centre as a literacy worker. Over the years she has been involved in tutor training, curriculum development and program evaluation in a variety of language instruction settings.

Photo: Moon Joyce

Introduction

The four songs developed for use in this chapter are recorded on the audio tape included with this book, thanks to the four singer/songwriters who gave us permission to reproduce them.

Songs are a good way to introduce variety to lesson materials. They are also an excellent means of introducing difficult topics to learners in a non-threatening manner. Still, this does not mean that we would introduce topics indiscriminately. As facilitators of learning we need to be aware of our learners, their lives and how they look at life. This is especially important if our learners' cultural background is different from our own.

There are other points to consider before using songs. If your learners do not have a strong auditory learning style, using songs could be more of a hindrance than a help. Some of the examples that follow take this factor into account by providing visual back-up in the form of written text. Even so, in the case of a strong auditory disability, using songs as lesson material would not be possible.

Other factors to consider are the learning environment and equipment. If a regular cassette player is being used, an enclosed, quiet space is required. This would be especially true in a group or classroom situation. In a one-to-one tutoring situation, headphones could be used. The exercises for each song are divided into "Warm-up," "Understanding the song," and "Word study" and "Guided discussion." The lessons are for learners at an Intermediate or Grade 3 level and higher. However, they can be easily adapted for use with beginners. For example, beginners, both literacy and EAL, could follow the printed lyrics while the song plays. If the learners are EAL, they need to be able to take part in a conversation in English. As well, providing an opportunity for discussion of the cultural information and assumptions that the songs embody is important. When you are using "Lies" by Moon Joyce, for example, it would be important that everyone understand that different countries have different laws regulating pornography, and different definitions of it.

You could use these four songs together as a unit, or you could use them as additions to other work you are doing. More songs appear in Chapter 7, "Women and Work."

"Singer of the Sacred Heart" by Connie Kaldor addresses the issue of gender and survival. This song worked for learners who live in an urban context or have experienced it. One group that worked with this song talked about street kids and the reasons why kids run away from their homes. Again, discussion based on the questions outlined in the warm-up exercise was helpful to those who were not familiar with the issues.

"A Cautionary Tale or Aren't you glad that you know Wen-Do?" by Jane Field addresses gender, ability and the issue of violence against women. When it was field tested in a mixed group, the facilitator felt that there would have been more in-depth discussion around the issues of violence in an all-woman group. The male learners in her group felt it was "too militant" and the female learners were silenced by their reaction. When you use this song, you might want to prepare a strategy to deal with this reaction, should it come up.

"Lies" by Moon Joyce talks about the way women are portrayed as objects of desire in pornographic magazines, a starting point for discussion of the ways in which the media exploits women. This song was field tested in mixed groups. It worked in both an intermediate literacy class and a basic EAL class. However, the discussion was more detailed in the literacy class. As well, differences in cultural backgrounds need to be taken into consideration. One instructor felt that this song would not be suitable for basic level EAL learners due to the subject matter and cultural differences.

"I, Black Woman" by Faith Nolan addresses the issues of stereotyping; in particular it deals with the name-calling black women have to deal with on an everyday basis. However, this song has a broad-based application, since most of us have been called names at one time or another. If you do not know your learners and want to use this lesson, use the warm-up to test their reactions before proceeding.

Having articulated the necessary warnings, I reiterate the point that my experience with using songs as lesson material has been positive. Learners relax. Good discussion and writing have resulted. When using this medium, it is best to use songs that are familiar to your learners or your learners' experience. Asking learners to bring in their favourite song is a good way to involve your learners in the process. The learners' choice of song might not deal with an "issue." However, it will help you to know your learners' musical preference and introduce a new way of learning.

In closing, I would like to leave you with two words, which I consider very important when it comes to learning: ***Have fun!***

A. Song: "Singer of the Sacred Heart"

by Connie Kaldor

Connie Kaldor is a performer whose writing spans many styles and who has found a home in the international folk music scene. With seven albums to her credit, Connie has toured around the world from Beijing to Boston and throughout Europe, as well as extensively in the USA and Canada. Her live show is legendary, with a mix of humour and emotionally gripping music.

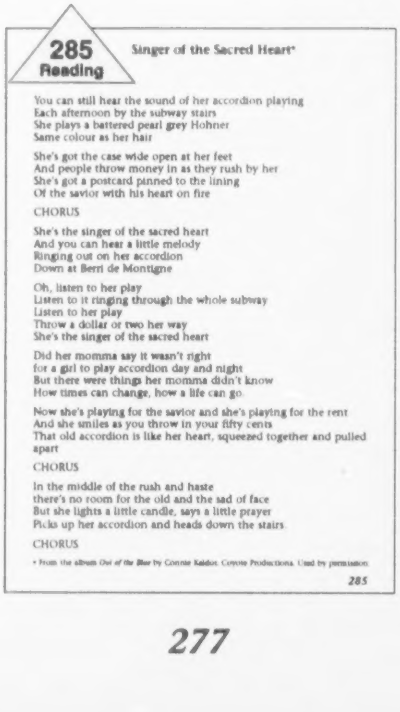
1. Warm-up

➤ Some questions to consider:
  - Who has seen street performers?
  - Where did you see them?
  - What were they doing?
  - Were they young or old?
  - Are they different from panhandlers or beggars?
  - Do we have beggars in Canada?
  - How do the homeless in your community live?
  - Do old people who are homeless have problems that are different from young people who are homeless?
  - Who are the homeless?
  - Are there more homeless in the cities? Why?

2. Understanding the song

➤ Ask learners to follow the words (page 285) while listening to the song.
➤ Look at the verse:

Did her momma say it wasn't right
for a girl to play accordion day and night
But there were things that her momma didn't know
How times can change, how a life can go.



285
Reading

Singer of the Sacred Heart*

You can still hear the sound of her accordion playing
Each afternoon by the subway stairs
She plays a battered pearl grey Hohner
Same colour as her hair

She's got the case wide open at her feet
And people throw money in as they rush by her
She's got a postcard pinned to the lining
Of the savior with his heart on fire

CHORUS

She's the singer of the sacred heart
And you can hear a little melody
Ringing out on her accordion
Down at Berri de Montigne

Oh, listen to her play
Listen to it ringing through the whole subway
Listen to her play
Throw a dollar or two her way
She's the singer of the sacred heart

Did her momma say it wasn't right
for a girl to play accordion day and night
But there were things her momma didn't know
How times can change, how a life can go

Now she's playing for the savior and she's playing for the rent
And she smiles as you throw in your fifty cents
That old accordion is like her heart, squeezed together and pulled apart

CHORUS

In the middle of the rush and haste
there's no room for the old and the sad of face
But she lights a little candle, says a little prayer
Picks up her accordion and heads down the stairs

CHORUS

* From the album *Out of the Blue* by Connie Kaldor. Coyote Productions. Used by permission.

285

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- Why do you think her momma might have said it wasn't right "for a girl to play accordion day and night"?
- Have times changed for women?

➤ Look at the lines "In the middle of the rush and haste/There's no room for the old and the sad of face."
- Give examples of older people who are rich and powerful. Talk or write about their lives.
- Give examples of older people who are poor. Talk or write about their lives.

➤ The song says, "That old accordion is like her heart/ Squeezed together and pulled apart." How is her heart like an accordion? What has squeezed it and pulled it apart?

➤ Give learners the question sheet (page 286).

286
Handout

Singer of the Sacred Heart

rmer playing? Describe her surroundings.

2. What colour is her accordion?

3. How old is she?

4. Why do you think that she is called the "Singer of the Sacred Heart?"

5. Do you think she's happy? Give reasons for your answer.

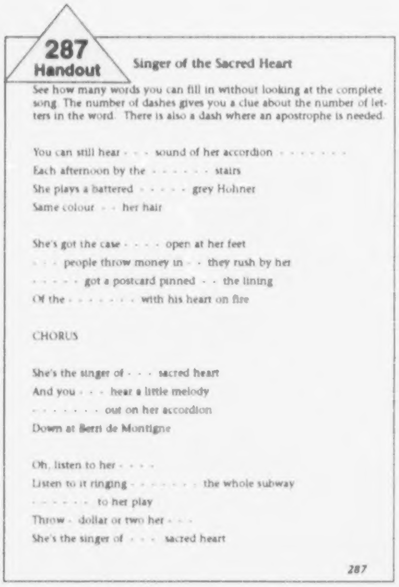
286

This is an opportunity to teach or review similes. Ask the learners for other examples; you might start a class list of similes that you can add to as you come across them in your reading.

3. Word study

➤ Give learners the cloze exercise (pages 287 – 288). Ask them to listen to the song again and fill in the blanks. Play the song as often as necessary.

➤ Ask the learners to find the contractions in the song and write out the two complete words for each contraction.



287
Handout

Singer of the Sacred Heart

See how many words you can fill in without looking at the complete song. The number of dashes gives you a clue about the number of letters in the word. There is also a dash where an apostrophe is needed.

You can still hear - - - sound of her accordion - - - - - - -
Each afternoon by the - - - - - - stairs
She plays a battered - - - - - grey Hohner
Same colour - - her hair

She's got the case - - - - open at her feet
- - - people throw money in - - they rush by her
- - - - - got a postcard pinned - - the lining
Of the - - - - - - - with his heart on fire

CHORUS

She's the singer of - - - sacred heart
And you - - - hear a little melody
- - - - - - - - out on her accordion
Down at Berri de Montigne

Oh, listen to her - - - -
Listen to it ringing - - - - - - - the whole subway
- - - - - - to her play
Throw - dollar or two her - - -
She's the singer of - - - sacred heart

287

4. Guided discussion

➤ Some questions to consider:
- Have you seen many women performing on the street or in the subway?
- If your answer is yes, talk about where you saw them and what they were doing.
- If your answer is no, what do you think are the reasons for this?

B. Song: "A Cautionary Tale..." by Jane Field

Jane Field is a Toronto singer/songwriter whose satirical songs highlight some of the absurdities of people's attitudes to disability and to lesbian and gay experience. She has just released her first cassette recording, *The Fishing Is Free*. When she's not singing or writing songs, Jane is a literacy program worker at St. Christopher House in Toronto.

This song could bring up painful memories for those who have survived sexual assault; it will likely bring up feelings about being the object of sexual harassment on the street.

1. Warm-up

➤ List the following words and expressions used to describe a person in a wheelchair: handicapped, disabled, otherwise abled, a person with a disability.

➤ Some questions to consider:

- Can you think of any other names?
- What do you think is a respectful description?
- Who can you ask about what is respectful?
- Do you think it is important for a woman to know how to protect herself?
- What steps do you take to protect yourself?

For example, the word "handicapped" makes some people think of "cap in hand." Many people feel that this is not respectful.

2. Understanding the song

➤ Listen to the song.

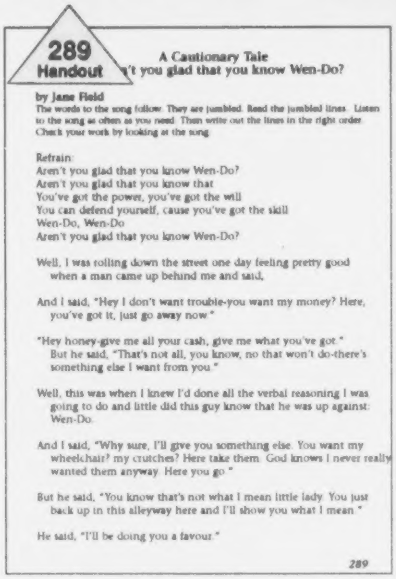
➤ Give learners the words to the song, jumbled up (pages 289 – 290).

➤ Ask them to read the jumbled lines, then listen to the song and write the lines in the correct order. Play the song as often as necessary.

➤ Compare with the correct version given on page 291.

➤ Ask learners to answer the questions about the song (page 292).

An easier version of the exercise is to ask the learners to cut apart the jumbled lines, assemble them in the correct order, then copy them.



289
Handout

A Cautionary Tale
't you glad that you know Wen-Do?

by Jane Field
The words to the song follow. They are jumbled. Read the jumbled lines. Listen to the song as often as you need. Then write out the lines in the right order. Check your work by looking at the song.

Refrain:
Aren't you glad that you know Wen-Do?
Aren't you glad that you know that
You've got the power, you've got the will
You can defend yourself, cause you've got the skill
Wen-Do, Wen-Do
Aren't you glad that you know Wen-Do?

Well, I was rolling down the street one day feeling pretty good
when a man came up behind me and said,

And I said, "Hey I don't want trouble-you want my money? Here,
you've got it, just go away now."

"Hey honey-give me all your cash, give me what you've got."
But he said, "That's not all, you know, no that won't do-there's
something else I want from you."

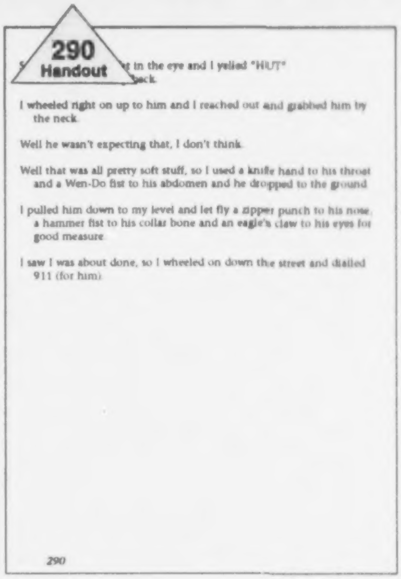
Well, this was when I knew I'd done all the verbal reasoning I was
going to do and little did this guy know that he was up against:
Wen-Do.

And I said, "Why sure, I'll give you something else. You want my
wheelchair? my crutches? Here take them. God knows I never really
wanted them anyway. Here you go."

But he said, "You know that's not what I mean little lady. You just
back up in this alleyway here and I'll show you what I mean."

He said, "I'll be doing you a favour."

289



290
Handout

S in the eye and I yelled "HUT"
ack.

I wheeled right on up to him and I reached out and grabbed him by
the neck.

Well he wasn't expecting that, I don't think.

Well that was all pretty soft stuff, so I used a knife hand to his throat
and a Wen-Do fist to his abdomen and he dropped to the ground.

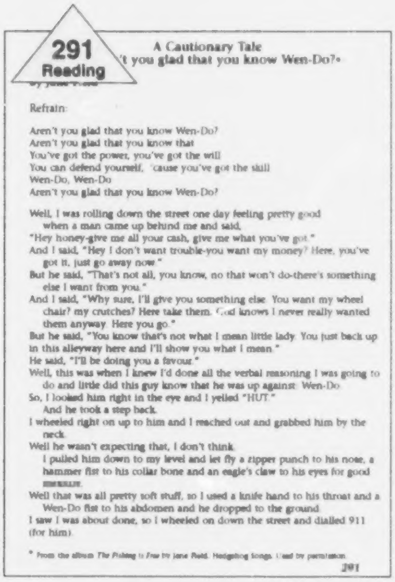
I pulled him down to my level and let fly a zipper punch to his nose,
a hammer fist to his collar bone and an eagle's claw to his eyes for
good measure.

I saw I was about done, so I wheeled on down the street and dialled
911 (for him).

290

3. Guided discussion

➤ Some questions to consider:
- Do you think the woman in this song was too violent in her reaction?
- If you answered yes, what would you have done if you were in her position?
- If you answered no, what do you think needs to be done to prevent violence in our society?



291
Reading

A Cautionary Tale
't you glad that you know Wen-Do?*

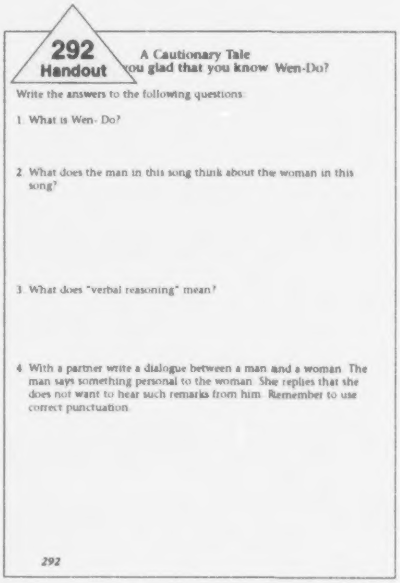
Refrain:

Aren't you glad that you know Wen-Do?
Aren't you glad that you know that
You've got the power, you've got the will
You can defend yourself, 'cause you've got the skill
Wen-Do, Wen-Do
Aren't you glad that you know Wen-Do?

Well, I was rolling down the street one day feeling pretty good
when a man came up behind me and said,
"Hey honey-give me all your cash, give me what you've got."
And I said, "Hey I don't want trouble-you want my money? Here, you've
got it, just go away now."
But he said, "That's not all, you know, no that won't do-there's something
else I want from you."
And I said, "Why sure, I'll give you something else. You want my wheel
chair? my crutches? Here take them. God knows I never really wanted
them anyway. Here you go."
But he said, "You know that's not what I mean little lady. You just back up
in this alleyway here and I'll show you what I mean."
He said, "I'll be doing you a favour."
Well, this was when I knew I'd done all the verbal reasoning I was going to
do and little did this guy know that he was up against: Wen-Do.
So, I looked him right in the eye and I yelled "HUT."
And he took a step back.
I wheeled right on up to him and I reached out and grabbed him by the
neck.
Well he wasn't expecting that, I don't think.
I pulled him down to my level and let fly a zipper punch to his nose, a
hammer fist to his collar bone and an eagle's claw to his eyes for good
measure.
Well that was all pretty soft stuff, so I used a knife hand to his throat and a
Wen-Do fist to his abdomen and he dropped to the ground.
I saw I was about done, so I wheeled on down the street and dialled 911
(for him).

* From the album *The Fishing is Free* by Jane Field. Hedgehog Songs. Used by permission.

291



292
Handout

A Cautionary Tale
ou glad that you know Wen-Do?

Write the answers to the following questions:

1. What is Wen- Do?

2. What does the man in this song think about the woman in this song?

3. What does "verbal reasoning" mean?

4. With a partner write a dialogue between a man and a woman. The man says something personal to the woman. She replies that she does not want to hear such remarks from him. Remember to use correct punctuation.

292

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C. Song: "Lies"

by Moon Joyce

Moon Joyce is a 42-year-old white lesbian of mixed English and Ukrainian ethnicity. With a fascination for life-long learning, Moon uses many creative tools in her teaching and facilitation to inform, challenge and consolidate key insights of the moment into usable, enjoyable forms. She says, "'Lies' is a song that only hints at the deep anger I feel every time I see the profit margin of the pornography industry and the effects of that industry on the bodies of those whose lives touch mine daily."

"Lies" is on Moon's album *The Infinite Edge*.

This song may touch off strong feelings in those who have been involved in the pornography industry, in those who use pornography and in those who are forced to watch it.

1. Warm-up

➤ Ask learners to pick a picture of a female model from a favourite magazine.

➤ Ask each in turn to tell how the picture makes them feel (happy, sad, angry, etc.) and explain why.

2. Understanding the song

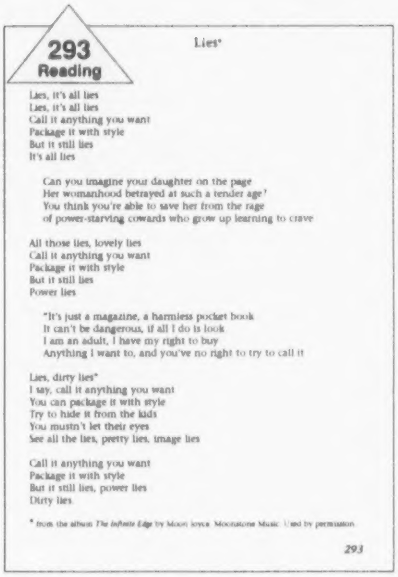
➤ Ask learners to listen to the song to find out what type of magazine she is singing about. Listen to the song as many times as needed.

➤ Read the words to the song (page 293) to check if people are on the right track.

➤ Ask learners to answer the questions about the song (page 294).

3. Guided discussion/debate

➤ Look again at the lines "I am an adult, I have my right to buy/ anything I want to." Are an individual's rights more important than the effect pornographic magazines have on society?



293
Reading

Lies*

Lies, it's all lies
Lies, it's all lies
Call it anything you want
Package it with style
But it still lies
It's all lies

Can you imagine your daughter on the page
Her womanhood betrayed at such a tender age?
You think you're able to save her from the rage
of power-starving cowards who grow up learning to crave

All those lies, lovely lies
Call it anything you want
Package it with style
But it still lies
Power lies

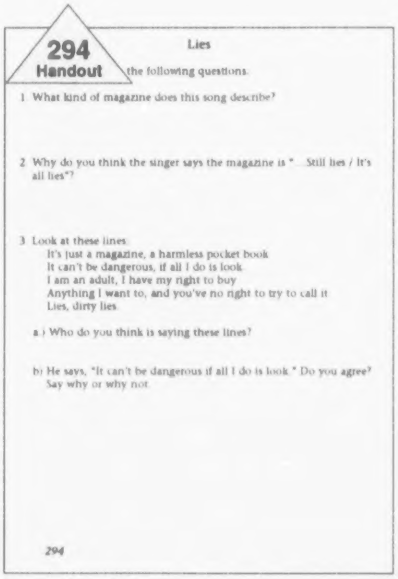
"It's just a magazine, a harmless pocket book
It can't be dangerous, if all I do is look
I am an adult, I have my right to buy
Anything I want to, and you've no right to try to call it

Lies, dirty lies"
I say, call it anything you want
You can package it with style
Try to hide it from the kids
You mustn't let their eyes
See all the lies, pretty lies, image lies

Call it anything you want
Package it with style
But it still lies, power lies
Dirty lies

* from the album *The Infinite Edge* by Moon Joyce. Moonstone Music. Used by permission.

293



294
Handout

Lies

the following questions.

1. What kind of magazine does this song describe?

2. Why do you think the singer says the magazine is "...Still lies / It's all lies"?

3. Look at these lines:
   It's just a magazine, a harmless pocket book
   It can't be dangerous, if all I do is look
   I am an adult, I have my right to buy
   Anything I want to, and you've no right to try to call it
   Lies, dirty lies.

   a.) Who do you think is saying these lines?

   b) He says, "It can't be dangerous if all I do is look." Do you agree? Say why or why not.

294

D. Song: "I, Black Woman"

by Faith Nolan

Faith Nolan was born in Halifax, and her parents and extended family were coal miners in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. Her commitment to social justice comes from her life experiences and those that she grew with through the cultural tool of music. Her politic is firmly rooted in her being working class, woman and African Canadian. "I, Black Woman" is from her album *Freedom to Love*.

1. Warm-up

➤ Ask learners to work with a partner to discuss this song. A tutor and a learner could be partners.

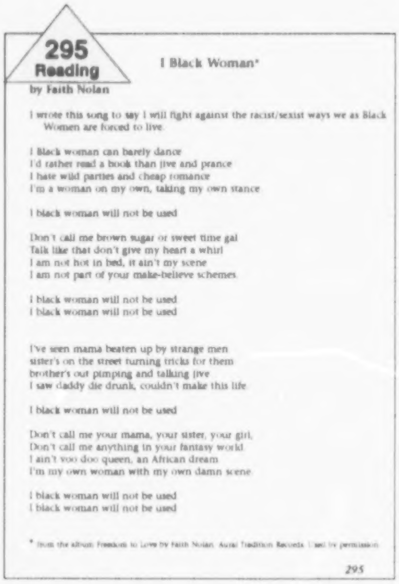
➤ Some questions to consider:

- Have you been called a name you don't like?
- How did this make you feel?
- Did it happen once or many times?
- Did you try to stop it?
- Have you tried to stop other people from calling others hurtful names? What happened?

2. Understanding the song

➤ Ask learners to continue to work with their partners:

- Listen to the song.
- Listen to the song a second time. While you are listening, think about what the song is about. After the song finishes, talk with your partner about your ideas.
- If you and your partner are not sure what the song is about, listen to it again.
- Follow the words (page 295) while listening to the song to check your understanding.
- Answer the questions on page 296. Share your answers.



295
Reading

I Black Woman*

by Faith Nolan

I wrote this song to say I will fight against the racist/sexist ways we as Black Women are forced to live.

I Black woman can barely dance
I'd rather read a book than jive and prance
I hate wild parties and cheap romance
I'm a woman on my own, taking my own stance

I black woman will not be used

Don't call me brown sugar or sweet time gal
Talk like that don't give my heart a whirl
I am not hot in bed, it ain't my scene
I am not part of your make-believe schemes

I black woman will not be used
I black woman will not be used

I've seen mama beaten up by strange men
sister's on the street turning tricks for them
brother's out pimping and talking jive
I saw daddy die drunk, couldn't make this life

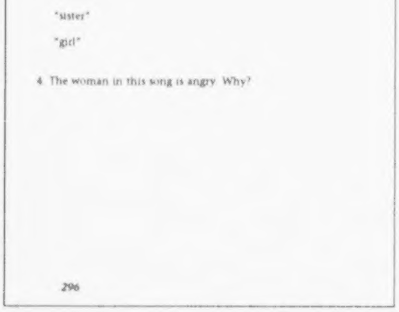
I black woman will not be used

Don't call me your mama, your sister, your girl,
Don't call me anything in your fantasy world
I ain't voo doo queen, an African dream
I'm my own woman with my own damn scene

I black woman will not be used
I black woman will not be used

* from the album Freedom to Love by Faith Nolan. Aural Tradition Records. Used by permission.

295



296
Handout

I Black Woman

nswers to the following questions

1. Does she like wild parties?

2. Does she like to read?

3. Does she like being called

"brown sugar"

"sweet time gal?"

"mama"

"sister"

"girl"

4. The woman in this song is angry. Why?

296

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3. Word study

➤ Ask learners to do the cloze exercise on the song (page 297).

297
Handout

Word Study

your partner. All the blanks need to be filled in with sight words, little words that are used most often in the English language

Hint: The number of dashes tells you the number of letters in the word.

For example _ _ _ = t h e or a n d

I Black Woman

by Faith Nolan

I Black woman can barely dance
I'd rather read - book than jive and prance
I hate wild parties - - - cheap romance
I'm a woman - - my own, taking my own stance

I black woman will not be used

Don't call me brown sugar - - sweet time gal
Talk like - - - - don't give my heart a whirl
I am not hot - - bed, it ain't my scene
I am not part of - - - - make-believe schemes

I've seen mama beaten - - by strange men
sister's - - the street turning tricks for them
brother's out pimping - - - talking jive
I saw daddy die drunk, couldn't make - - - - life

I black woman will not - - used

Don't call me - - - - mama, your sister, your girl,
Don't call me anything - - your fantasy world
I ain't voo doo queen - - African dream
I'm - - own woman with my own damn scene

I black woman will not be used

297

4. Guided discussion

➤ Look at the last verse of this song:

> *Don't call me your mama, your sister, your girl*
> *Don't call me anything in your fantasy world*
> *I ain't voo doo queen, an African dream*
> *I am my own woman with my own damn scene.*
> *I black woman will not be used.*
> *I black woman will not be used.*

➤ Some questions to consider:
- What does this verse mean?
- Why are these names hurtful?

5. Writing

➤ Ask each learner to make a list of names that s/he finds hurtful.

➤ Invite learners, using the verse above as a model, to write a statement that tells people what they would like to be called, and what they don't want to be called.

Racial, sexual and other slurs are strong words; saying them, hearing them and writing them down bring out strong emotions. In groups where there are both women and men, white people and people of colour, people with and without disabilities, you want to avoid situations where oppressor groups say the names out loud; for example, you don't want men to call out "slut" in response to the question "What are hurtful words?" because women in the group shouldn't have to hear that word from a man, especially in the classroom which should be a safe place. That is why the instructions ask learners to make a list of names they find hurtful to themselves, and then to use those slurs to make a strong statement of their selfhood.

Resources

(See the Bibliography for complete listings and for ordering information.)

"Singer of the Sacred Heart" written and performed by Connie Kaldor, *Out of the Blue* 1994.

"A Cautionary Tale or Aren't You Glad That You Know Wen-do?" written and performed by Jane Field on *The Fishing is Free* 1994.

"Lies" written and performed by Moon Joyce. on *The Infinite Edge* 1985.

"I, Black Woman" written and performed by Faith Nolan on *Freedom to Love* 1989.

Singer of the Sacred Heart
by Connie Kaldor

You can still hear the sound of her accordion playing
Each afternoon by the subway stairs
She plays a battered pearl grey Hohner
Same colour as her hair

She's got the case wide open at her feet
And people throw money in as they rush by her
She's got a postcard pinned to the lining
Of the savior with his heart on fire

CHORUS:

She's the singer of the sacred heart
And you can hear a little melody
Ringing out on her accordion
Down at Berri de Montigne

Oh, listen to her play
Listen to it ringing through the whole subway
Listen to her play
Throw a dollar or two her way
She's the singer of the sacred heart

Did her momma say it wasn't right
for a girl to play accordion day and night
But there were things her momma didn't know
How times can change, how a life can go.

Now she's playing for the savior and she's playing for the rent
And she smiles as you throw in your fifty cents
That old accordion is like her heart, squeezed together and pulled apart

CHORUS

In the middle of the rush and haste
there's no room for the old and the sad of face
But she lights a little candle, says a little prayer
Picks up her accordion and heads down the stairs.

CHORUS

From the album *Out of the Blue* by Connie Kaldor. Word of Mouth Music. Used by permission.

Singer of the Sacred Heart
Question Sheet

1. Where is the performer playing? Describe her surroundings.

2. What colour is her accordion?

3. How old is she?

4. Why do you think that she is called the "Singer of the Sacred Heart?"

5. Do you think she's happy? Give reasons for your answer.

Singer of the Sacred Heart

Cloze Exercize

See how many words you can fill in without looking at the complete song. The number of dashes gives you a clue about the number of letters in the word. There is also a dash where an apostrophe is needed.

You can still hear _ _ _ sound of her accordion _ _ _ _ _ _ _
Each afternoon by the _ _ _ _ _ _ stairs
She plays a battered _ _ _ _ _ grey Hohner
Same colour _ _ her hair

She's got the case _ _ _ _ open at her feet
_ _ _ people throw money in _ _ they rush by her
_ _ _ _ _ got a postcard pinned _ _ the lining
Of the _ _ _ _ _ _ _ with his heart on fire

CHORUS:

She's the singer of _ _ _ sacred heart
And you _ _ _ hear a little melody
_ _ _ _ _ _ _ out on her accordion
Down at Berri de Montigne

Oh, listen to her _ _ _ _
Listen to it ringing _ _ _ _ _ _ _ the whole subway
_ _ _ _ _ _ to her play
Throw _ dollar or two her _ _ _
She's the singer of _ _ _ sacred heart

Did her _ _ _ _ _ say it wasn't right
_ _ _ a girl to play _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ day and night
But _ _ _ _ _ were things her momma _ _ _ _ _ _ know
How times can _ _ _ _ _ _, how a life can go.

Now she's playing for _ _ _ saviour and she's playing _ _ _ the rent
And she _ _ _ _ _ _ as you throw in _ _ _ _ fifty cents
That old accordion _ _ like her heart,
squeezed _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ and pulled apart

CHORUS

In _ _ _ middle of the rush _ _ _ haste
There's no room _ _ _ the old and the _ _ _ of face
But she _ _ _ _ _ _ a little candle, says _ little prayer
Picks up _ _ _ accordion and heads down _ _ _ stairs.

CHORUS

A Cautionary Tale
or Aren't you glad that you know Wen-Do?

by Jane Field

Exercise

The words to the song follow. They are jumbled. Read the jumbled lines. Listen to the song as often as you need. Then write out the lines in the right order. Check your work by looking at the song.

CHORUS:
Aren't you glad that you know Wen-Do?
Aren't you glad that you know that
You've got the power, you've got the will
You can defend yourself, cause you've got the skill
Wen-Do, Wen-Do
Aren't you glad that you know Wen-Do?

Well, I was rolling down the street one day feeling pretty good
when a man came up behind me and said,

And I said, "Hey I don't want trouble – you want my money? Here,
you've got it, just go away now."

"Hey honey-give me all your cash, give me what you've got."
But he said, "That's not all, you know, no that won't do – there's
something else I want from you."

Well, this was when I knew I'd done all the verbal reasoning I was
going to do and little did this guy know that he was up against:
Wen-Do.

And I said, "Why sure, I'll give you something else. You want my
wheelchair? my crutches? Here take them. God knows I never really
wanted them anyway. Here you go."

But he said, "You know that's not what I mean little lady. You just
back up in this alleyway here and I'll show you what I mean."

He said, "I'll be doing you a favour."

So, I looked him right in the eye and I yelled "HUT."
And he took a step back.

I wheeled right on up to him and I reached out and grabbed him by the neck.

Well he wasn't expecting that, I don't think.

Well that was all pretty soft stuff, so I used a knife hand to his throat and a Wen-Do fist to his abdomen and he dropped to the ground.

I pulled him down to my level and let fly a zipper punch to his nose, a hammer fist to his collar bone and an eagle's claw to his eyes for good measure.

I saw I was about done, so I wheeled on down the street and dialled 911 (for him).

A Cautionary Tale
or Aren't you glad that you know Wen-Do?
by Jane Field

CHORUS:

Aren't you glad that you know Wen-Do?
Aren't you glad that you know that
You've got the power, you've got the will
You can defend yourself, 'cause you've got the skill
Wen-Do, Wen-Do
Aren't you glad that you know Wen-Do?

Well, I was rolling down the street one day feeling pretty good
when a man came up behind me and said,
"Hey honey – give me all your cash, give me what you've got."
And I said, "Hey I don't want trouble – you want my money? Here, you've
got it, just go away now."
But he said, "That's not all, you know, no that won't do – there's something
else I want from you."
And I said, "Why sure, I'll give you something else. You want my
wheelchair? my crutches? Here take them. God knows I never really
wanted them anyway. Here you go."
But he said, "You know that's not what I mean little lady. You just back up
in this alleyway here and I'll show you what I mean."
He said, "I'll be doing you a favour."
Well, this was when I knew I'd done all the verbal reasoning I was going to
do and little did this guy know that he was up against: Wen-Do.
So, I looked him right in the eye and I yelled "HUT."
And he took a step back.
I wheeled right on up to him and I reached out and grabbed him by the
neck.
Well he wasn't expecting that, I don't think.
I pulled him down to my level and let fly a zipper punch to his nose, a
hammer fist to his collar bone and an eagle's claw to his eyes for good
measure.
Well that was all pretty soft stuff, so I used a knife hand to his throat and a
Wen-Do fist to his abdomen and he dropped to the ground.
I saw I was about done, so I wheeled on down the street and dialled 911
(for him).

From the album *The Fishing Is Free* by Jane Field. Hedgehog Songs. Used by permission.

A Cautionary Tale
or Aren't you glad that you know Wen-Do?
Question Sheet

Write the answers to the following questions:

1. What is Wen-Do?

2. What does the man in this song think about the woman in this song?

3. What does "verbal reasoning" mean?

4. With a partner, write a dialogue between a man and a woman. The man says something personal to the woman. She replies that she does not want to hear such remarks from him. Remember to use correct punctuation.

Lies

by Moon Joyce

Lies, it's all lies
Lies, it's all lies
Call it anything you want
Package it with style
But it still lies
It's all lies

Can you imagine your daughter on the page
Her womanhood betrayed at such a tender age?
You think you're able to save her from the rage
of power-starving cowards who grow up learning to crave

All those lies, lovely lies
Call it anything you want
Package it with style
But it still lies
Power lies

"It's just a magazine, a harmless pocket book
It can't be dangerous, if all I do is look
I am an adult, I have my right to buy
Anything I want to, and you've no right to try to call it

Lies, dirty lies
I say, call it anything you want
You can package it with style
Try to hide it from the kids
You mustn't let their eyes
See all the lies, pretty lies, image lies

Call it anything you want
Package it with style
But it still lies, power lies
Dirty lies.

From the album *The Infinite Edge* by Moon Joyce. Moonstone Music. Used by permission.

Lies

Question Sheet

Write the answers to the following questions:

1. What kind of magazine does this song describe?

2. Why do you think the singer says the magazine is " . . . Still lies / It's all lies"?

3. Look at these lines:

   It's just a magazine, a harmless pocket book
   It can't be dangerous, if all I do is look.
   I am an adult, I have my right to buy
   Anything I want to, and you've no right to try to call it
   Lies, dirty lies.

   a) Who do you think is saying these lines?

   b) He says, "It can't be dangerous if all I do is look." Do you agree? Say why or why not.

I, Black Woman
by Faith Nolan

I Black woman can barely dance
I'd rather read a book than jive and prance
I hate wild parties and cheap romance
I'm a woman on my own, taking my own stance.

  I black woman will not be used

Don't call me brown sugar or sweet time gal
Talk like that don't give my heart a whirl
I am not hot in bed, it ain't my scene
I am not part of your make-believe schemes.

  I black woman will not be used
  I black woman will not be used

I've seen mama beaten up by strange men
sister's on the street turning tricks for them
brother's out pimping and talking jive
I saw daddy die drunk, couldn't make this life.

  I black woman will not be used

Don't call me your mama, your sister, your girl,
Don't call me anything in your fantasy world.
I ain't voo doo queen, an African dream
I'm my own woman with my own damn scene.

  I black woman will not be used
  I black woman will not be used

From the album *Freedom to Love* by Faith Nolan. Vancouver Folk Music Festival Society. Used by permission.

I, Black Woman

Question Sheet

Write down the answers to the following questions:

1. Does she like wild parties?

2. Does she like to read?

3. Does she like being called:

   "brown sugar"

   "sweet time gal?"

   "mama"

   "sister"

   "girl"

4. The woman in this song is angry. Why?

I, Black Woman
Word Study

Fill in the blanks with your partner. All the blanks need to be filled in with sight words, little words that are used most often in the English language

Hint: The number of dashes tells you the number of letters in the word.

For example: __ __ __ = t h e or a n d

I, Black Woman
by Faith Nolan

I Black woman can barely dance
I'd rather read __ book than jive and prance
I hate wild parties __ __ __ cheap romance
I'm a woman __ __ my own, taking my own stance.

I black woman will not be used

Don't call me brown sugar __ __ sweet time gal
Talk like __ __ __ __ don't give my heart a whirl
I am not hot __ __ bed, it ain't my scene
I am not part of __ __ __ __ make-believe schemes

I've seen mama beaten __ __ by strange men
sister's __ __ the street turning tricks for them
brother's out pimping __ __ __ talking jive
I saw daddy die drunk, couldn't make __ __ __ __ life

I black woman will not __ __ used

Don't call me __ __ __ __ mama, your sister, your girl,
Don't call me anything __ __ your fantasy world.
I ain't voo doo queen __ __ African dream
I'm __ __ own woman with my own damn scene

I black woman will not be used

11. Poetry by Canadian Women

by Helen Winton

photo: Moon Joyce

ORIGINALLY from Ontario, I travelled haphazardly around the globe until a twist of fate took me to the Yukon in 1976. For the past 12 years I have been an adult education instructor at Tr'odek Hatr'unothan Zho, Dawson Campus of Yukon College in Dawson City. I was inspired by the many wonderful books of poetry that I read while working on this chapter and I discovered that poetry can be a powerful learning tool.

Introduction

I hope the activities in this chapter will stimulate interest in poetry and introduce students to some Canadian women poets who write in English. When I used the poems in this chapter with my students, they were interested in discussing them and wanted to go on to investigate and discuss some women's issues raised by the poems. There were seven women and three men in my group. I asked them to listen to the poems, and made the rest of the activities optional. I found everyone willing to take part, except for one man who didn't do any writing, but always sat close enough to the group to hear everything that was said.

You will want to select themes and poems to suit your class or group, both in content and at a reading level that is not too difficult. Poetry, like music, is meant to be heard, so make certain the selections are read aloud, by yourself, your students, guest readers or a combination of all three. I aim for an absolute minimum of two readings, and I'm happy if I can work in three or four oral readings in the first session.

💔 Attempt to use a positive approach with negative or depressing topics. For example, discuss what can be done to help a victim of sexual abuse rather than simply recounting various stories of victims, although the recounting is an important first step.

💔 The content of some of the poems is disturbing. You may not feel comfortable using them all in a mixed group, or in a group that you do not know well. These poems will almost certainly raise strong emotions in students, especially those who have been victims of abuse. You can expect some students to disclose their own abuse, past or present, either to the group as a whole, or to you in private. You can begin to prepare yourself for such disclosures by reading the introduction to this book. (See "Responding to Disclosures of Abuse in Women's Lives," page 15).

To do the activities in this chapter, you will need as many books of poetry as you can lay your hands on (see Resources at the end of the chapter for suggestions), pictures of the poets (if available) and biographical sketches.

In this chapter the poems are grouped according to their themes. However, there are many possible variations on this grouping. You could:

- compare and contrast the styles of various authors;
- introduce the authors using a smorgasbord approach;
- discuss authors individually by studying several of their poems;
- take a chronological, geographical or culturally-based approach to the authors;
- look at poets from other parts of the world.

Other possible themes include sickness, death, dying, old age, relationships, fathers and marriage. I found many poems on these topics when I was doing my research. If you aim for diversity in the poets, you will find poems from different points of view, many of which your students will recognize and identify with.

A. Introduction

1. Writing

➤ Ask students to write about their feelings about poetry, in a short paragraph, a few sentences or a few words. Ask students to put their names on the papers. Save them to be returned at the end of the poetry unit.

2. Brainstorm

➤ Brainstorm the word "poetry" for 10 – 15 minutes with your class, recording on a flip chart. This could also be done by individual students, with the results posted on the wall afterwards.
➤ Then brainstorm and discuss "Canadian poetry."
➤ Finally, brainstorm "Canadian women poets."
➤ Save the records of the brainstorms for use at the end of the chapter.

Going from the general to the specific enables the instructor to focus in on the theme, introduce the topic and find out what the students know and think about poetry. Saving the writing and flip chart papers can assist the instructor and the students to evaluate their learning upon completion of the unit.

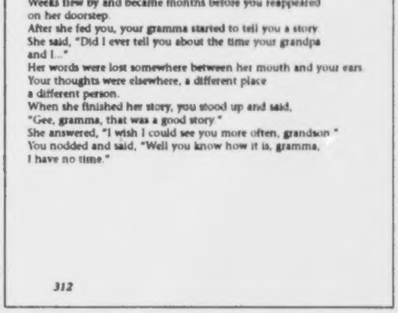
B. Theme: Motherhood

In this section there are poems from the point of view of mothers, children and grandchildren.

1. Reading: Several poems

➤ Spend 15 – 30 minutes introducing, reading and discussing each of the following poems and their authors:

- "The Mother" and "Green Rain" by Dorothy Livesay
- "Their Time" by Linda McDonald (page 312-313)
- "Repetitions for My Mother" by Lorna Crozier (page 314)
- "completely seduced by motherhood, from now on I will call you not-mother" by di brandt
- "Step Son" by Kate Braid (page 315)
- "Hibernation" by Patricia Young (page 316)



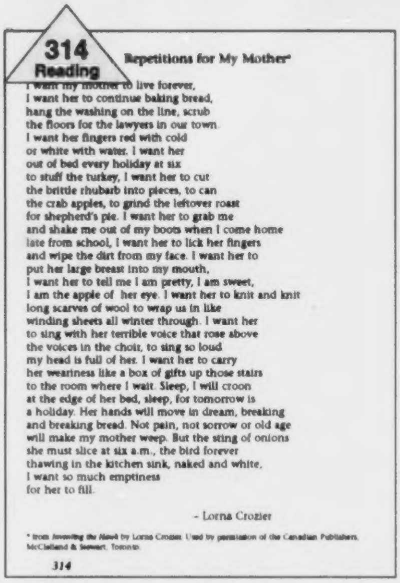
312
Reading

Their Time*

I hear you went to visit your gramma the other day
She was glad to see you,
and greeted you with open arms and a smile
"I'm glad to see you grandson, where have you been?"
"Oh, I'm working now, gramma. And you know how it is,
I have no time."
She fed you rabbit stew and bannock.
You ate quickly and told her she was a great cook
You were still chewing your last piece of bannock as you
dashed out the door.
"See you, gramma!"
Her tiny figure stood in the doorway and watched long
after your truck disappeared around the corner

Weeks flew by and became months before you reappeared
on her doorstep.
After she fed you, your gramma started to tell you a story
She said, "Did I ever tell you about the time your grandpa
and I..."
Her words were lost somewhere between her mouth and your ears
Your thoughts were elsewhere, a different place
a different person.
When she finished her story, you stood up and said,
"Gee, gramma, that was a good story."
She answered, "I wish I could see you more often, grandson."
You nodded and said, "Well you know how it is, gramma,
I have no time."

312



314 Reading

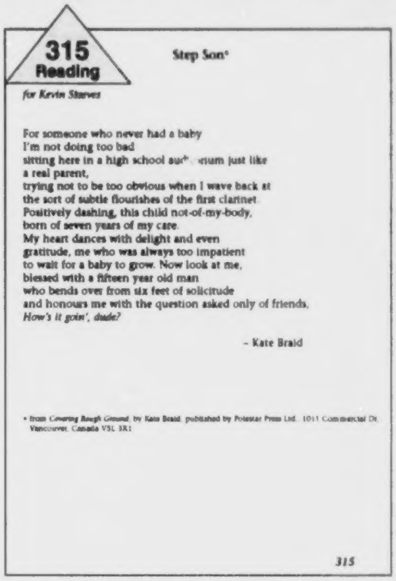
Repetitions for My Mother*

I want my mother to live forever,
I want her to continue baking bread,
hang the washing on the line, scrub
the floors for the lawyers in our town.
I want her fingers red with cold
or white with water. I want her
out of bed every holiday at six
to stuff the turkey, I want her to cut
the brittle rhubarb into pieces, to can
the crab apples, to grind the leftover roast
for shepherd's pie. I want her to grab me
and shake me out of my boots when I come home
late from school, I want her to lick her fingers
and wipe the dirt from my face. I want her to
put her large breast into my mouth,
I want her to tell me I am pretty, I am sweet,
I am the apple of her eye. I want her to knit and knit
long scarves of wool to wrap us in like
winding sheets all winter through. I want her
to sing with her terrible voice that rose above
the voices in the choir, to sing so loud
my head is full of her. I want her to carry
her weariness like a box of gifts up those stairs
to the room where I wait. Sleep, I will croon
at the edge of her bed, sleep, for tomorrow is
a holiday. Her hands will move in dream, breaking
and breaking bread. Not pain, not sorrow or old age
will make my mother weep. But the sting of onions
she must slice at six a.m., the bird forever
thawing in the kitchen sink, naked and white,
I want so much emptiness
for her to fill.

– Lorna Crozier

* from *Inventing the Hawk* by Lorna Crozier. Used by permission of the Canadian Publishers, McClelland & Stewart, Toronto.

314



315 Reading

Step Son*

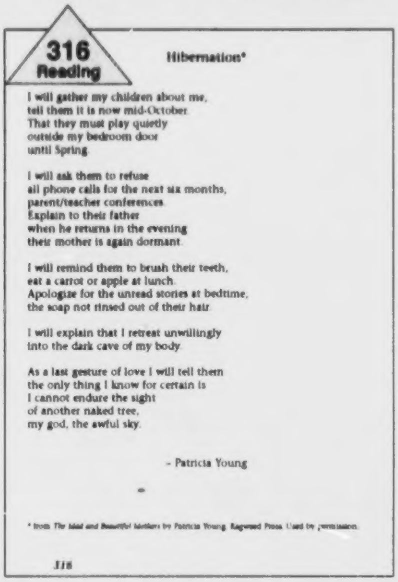
for Kevin Starves

For someone who never had a baby
I'm not doing too bad
sitting here in a high school auditorium just like
a real parent,
trying not to be too obvious when I wave back at
the sort of subtle flourishes of the first clarinet.
Positively dashing, this child not-of-my-body,
born of seven years of my care.
My heart dances with delight and even
gratitude, me who was always too impatient
to wait for a baby to grow. Now look at me,
blessed with a fifteen year old man
who bends over from six feet of solicitude
and honours me with the question asked only of friends,
How's it goin', dude?

– Kate Braid

* from *Covering Rough Ground*, by Kate Braid, published by Polestar Press Ltd., 1011 Commercial Dr. Vancouver, Canada V5L 3X1

315



316 Reading

Hibernation*

I will gather my children about me,
tell them it is now mid-October.
That they must play quietly
outside my bedroom door
until Spring.

I will ask them to refuse
all phone calls for the next six months,
parent/teacher conferences.
Explain to their father
when he returns in the evening
their mother is again dormant.

I will remind them to brush their teeth,
eat a carrot or apple at lunch.
Apologize for the unread stories at bedtime,
the soap not rinsed out of their hair.

I will explain that I retreat unwillingly
into the dark cave of my body.

As a last gesture of love I will tell them
the only thing I know for certain is
I cannot endure the sight
of another naked tree,
my god, the awful sky.

– Patricia Young

* from *The Mad and Beautiful Mothers* by Patricia Young, Ragweed Press. Used by permission.

316

Some of the poems are reproduced at the end of this chapter. Dorothy Livesay's works are available in most libraries and bookstores.

➤ Introduce only one or two poems per session. Before reading any poem, you might give a brief biographical sketch of each author, show photographs if possible and pass around any of their books, or anthologies and periodicals in which their poems have been published.

➤ Introduce any new or difficult vocabulary.

➤ Discuss any phrases or metaphors that might present problems.

2. Guided discussion and review

➤ After the group has read all the poems, over several sessions, discuss the similarities and relationships between them. Some questions to consider:

- What is the theme of "Green Rain?" What do you think the author is trying to say?
- What are the similarities between "Green Rain" and "Their Time"? Is this common emotion timeless or has it changed from generation to generation?
- What are the similarities between Dorothy Livesay's poem "The Mother" and di brandt's poem which begins "completely seduced . . ."?
- Why does di brandt want to call her mother "not-mother"?
- How does Kate Braid stamp a date onto her poem? (The word "dude".)

3. Follow-up activities

➤ **Make a collage:** Look through magazines for pictures that could be used to illustrate the poems; this could be done individually, in pairs or in larger groups; make collages to be posted around the room; the titles of the poems, authors' names or lines from the poems could be sprinkled throughout the collage.
➤ **Write:** Choose the poem that you like best or that has the most meaning for you, and write a paragraph outlining your feelings
➤ **Research:** Ask students to look through the books for other poems that would fall under this theme and share them with the group.
➤ **Write a poem:** For reluctant writers, try formula poems, which are fun and gratifying. Here is one example:

If your books are full of poems that are too hard to read, copy some of the easier ones and ask students to look through the resulting collection.

line 1: first name
line 2: four adjectives describing yourself in a positive way
line 3: mother (father, son, daughter) of _________
line 4: lover of (list 3 things)
line 5: who feels (list 3 things)
line 6: who fears (list 3 things)
line 7: who would like to ______________________
line 8: last name

Mary
sensitive, warm, kind, gentle
mother of Stephen and Rose
lover of pizza, music and birds
who feels everyone is created for something special
who fears hatred, thunderstorms and silence
who would like to learn one new thing every day
Jones

I got this idea from an article by Sara Garfield in the *Journal of Reading* (vol. 37, no. 1, Sept. 1993) and have used it several times with my classes.

C. Theme: Physical Violence

1. Reading: Several poems

➤ Spend 15-30 minutes introducing, reading and discussing each of the following poems and their authors:

- "Loving Obscenities" by Louise Halfe (page 317)
- "inside the bound woman is another, who loves to dance" by di brandt (page 318)
- "Half the Sky" by Judith Krause (page 319)
- "Punishments" by Leona Gom (page 320)
- "The Child Who Walks Backwards" by Lorna Crozier (page 321)

317
Reading

Loving Obscenities *

those stupid
Indian Affairs glasses
that looked like
the slanted eyes of
a Siamese cat

He always walked
stooped
puffing on Export A
disguising his whisky breath
with spearmint gum

She always wore
a black and blue shiner
every Friday and Saturday night
Those stupid fist marks
of his drama attacks

His eyes moved swiftly
examining every visible track
poking and stubbing his feet
at the sign of suspected
visiting lovers

And
When they were together
Mother and Father
He would walk ahead
muttering his loving obscenities
while she walked softly behind
staring through his head
with those cheap
Indian Affairs glasses

- Louise B. Halfe

* from *Bear Bones and Feathers* by Louise B. Halfe. © Coteau Books 1995/CANCOPY. Used by permission.

317

318
Reading

nd woman is another, who loves to dance."
nd above a snowstorm, once, wild & high

right now she is lying squashed, flat, in the basement of the belly of the bound woman

she is paralyzed from the neck down

her mouth keeps opening keeps opening keeps opening, she is trying to say something, to remember, she is trying to tell us-

how she fell into the basement, how she was pushed into it, under the slab of concrete, how long she's been lying there, hardly breathing, who it was that pushed her there

in spite of her love for this man, in spite of her love

inside the paralyzed woman inside the bound woman is another, whose breathing is proud & free, who stretches past concrete, past paralyzed cells

whispering, remember me, me

for Diana

- di brandt

* from *Prairie Fire*, Vol. 15, No. 1, Spring 1994, p. 50. Used by permission.

318

319
Reading

Half the Sky *

(for K.)

All she can see, with her left eye swollen shut, jaw wired.
She sits on the hospital steps, trying to decide whether to
spend the ten dollars in her purse on a taxi home or walk the
sixteen blocks, her leg still not quite healed from the last
time, ribs sore but not broken from his kicking. The cops
say leave or you're dead meat, the counsellors say don't go
back, but her kids want to go home. They're too old for the
shelter.

Tonight her face is as mottled as the evening sky, all
purple and pink, and she knows once she gets home, he'll
take the ten dollars or hock her wedding ring again. He's the only
man she's lived with, ever since she left home at
13 and now, at 29, her hair falling out, nails bitten to the
quick, her kids won't take sides, won't even call 911
if they think she started it.

- Judith Krause

* from *Half the Sky* by Judith Krause. © Coteau Books 1995/CANCOPY. Used by permission.

319

The first three might be introduced and discussed as a unit as they share the theme of violence between couples; the last two could be grouped together in a similar fashion under the theme of violence towards children.

Don't forget to give as much background material about the authors as possible, show photos and books, go over all difficult vocabulary and allow for lots of questions.

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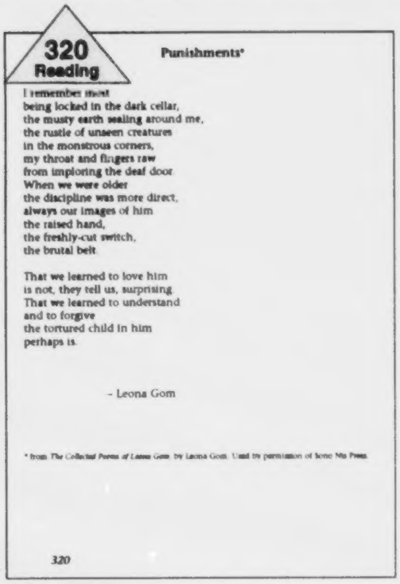

320
Reading

Punishments*

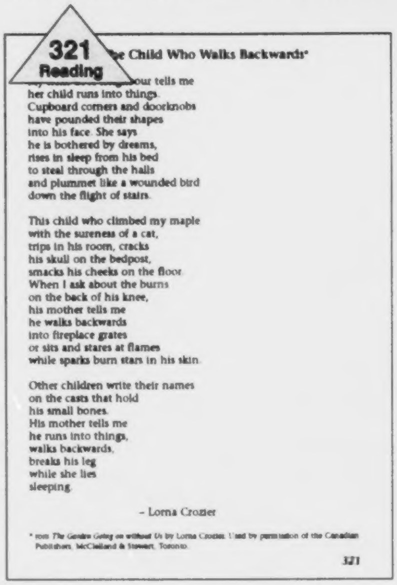
I remember most
being locked in the dark cellar,
the musty earth sealing around me,
the rustle of unseen creatures
in the monstrous corners,
my throat and fingers raw
from imploring the deaf door.
When we were older
the discipline was more direct,
always our images of him
the raised hand,
the freshly-cut switch,
the brutal belt.

That we learned to love him
is not, they tell us, surprising.
That we learned to understand
and to forgive
the tortured child in him
perhaps is.

– Leona Gom

* from *The Collected Poems of Leona Gom*, by Leona Gom. Used by permission of Sono Nis Press.

320


321
Reading

e Child Who Walks Backwards*

our tells me
her child runs into things.
Cupboard corners and doorknobs
have pounded their shapes
into his face. She says
he is bothered by dreams,
rises in sleep from his bed
to steal through the halls
and plummet like a wounded bird
down the flight of stairs.

This child who climbed my maple
with the sureness of a cat,
trips in his room, cracks
his skull on the bedpost,
smacks his cheeks on the floor.
When I ask about the burns
on the back of his knee,
his mother tells me
he walks backwards
into fireplace grates
or sits and stares at flames
while sparks burn stars in his skin.

Other children write their names
on the casts that hold
his small bones.
His mother tells me
he runs into things,
walks backwards,
breaks his leg
while she lies
sleeping.

– Lorna Crozier

* from *The Garden Going on without Us* by Lorna Crozier. Used by permission of the Canadian Publishers, McClelland & Stewart, Toronto.

321

2. Free writing

➤ After each group of poems has been presented and discussed, allow time for a free write; students write whatever thoughts come to their mind in their journals or on scrap paper for about 10 minutes; some students may prefer to make sketches.

➤ This free writing or art is meant to be private.

3. Debate

➤ Organize a debate about the care of children. Some questions to consider:

- What are the rights of children?
- Are they being sufficiently protected?
- What are some of the problems in protecting children, and how might they be overcome? For example, some children are too young or too afraid to speak out.
- What do you think are some of the underlying causes of violence against children?

4. Film: *Loved, Honoured and Bruised*

➤ Watch the NFB film *Loved, Honoured and Bruised.*

➤ Some questions to consider:
- Why do some women stay in violent relationships?
- What are some of the positive things that are happening today in this regard?
- What are some of the resources in our community to help women in abusive relationships?

D. Theme: Sexual Violence

1. Newspaper search

➤ Spend about 30 minutes looking through newspapers and magazines for articles and pictures about sexual violence. This activity can be done individually or in pairs. Clip them out and briefly share them with the rest of the group. Save them to use in the next activity.

2. Reading: "Not a Love Story" by Patricia Young

➤ Read the poem with the group (page 322).
➤ Discuss the meaning of the lines "I have refined the cowardly art/of editing my life" as well as the general theme of the poem.
➤ Elicit one word from each member of the group to express his/her feelings after reading the poem.
➤ Cluster the words on the board and then ask students to make posters or collages using the words and some of the articles and pictures that have been collected.

322
Reading

Not a Love Story*

Men and women can't speak
to each other after seeing it
How long till the anger burns down
and one turns to the other?

My friend is working on another movie-
child prostitution in Vancouver
Is the right person for such a job
a woman shaking with rage?

Her younger sister died
on a train to Calgary, propped up
like luggage beside her pimp

My friend says her sister
was the beautiful one, untouchable
as a white star

I am stirring the soup
There is nothing left for me to do
I have painted myself into a warm
bright corner where my children
are well-fed and smiling

She tells me at which theatre
it is playing, at what time,
that every woman should see it
But I have refined the cowardly art
of editing my life

I have heard enough stories
to know they are not all about love

– Patricia Young

* from *The Mad and Beautiful Mothers* by Patricia Young, Ragweed Press. Used by permission.

322

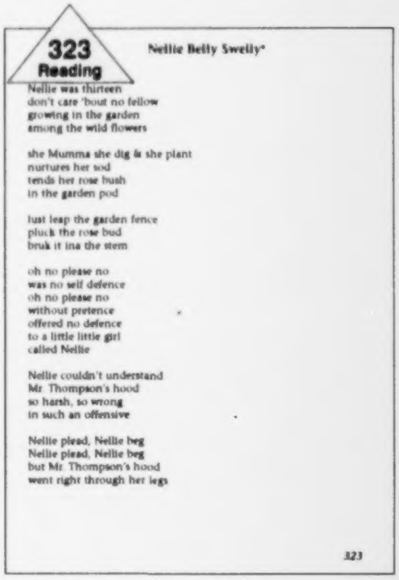
If you are with a strong, emotionally stable group, you might consider watching the NFB film *Not a Love Story*. Use this film with caution, however, as it is very graphic and disturbing and *must* be previewed.

One difficulty with showing the film in class is that it is difficult for students to decide not to watch it. To get around this, you might tell the students several days in advance that you plan to show the film. Give them a strong warning about the content of the film, and ask them to make individual decisions about whether they will attend that class session.

Alternatively, if there is going to be a public showing of this film, you could arrange to go with a group of your students. (For information about public showings, you could contact a local group that deals with violence against women.)

3. Reading: "Nellie Belly Swelly" by Lillian Allen

➤ If possible, introduce Lillian Allen by listening to a poem on one of her tapes so the students can imagine how she might read the poem. I used "Harriet Tubman" from *Nothing But a Hero.*
➤ Read the poem (pages 323 – 324) with the group. Attempt to read the poem as the poet might read it.



323
Reading

Nellie Belly Swelly*

Nellie was thirteen
don't care 'bout no fellow
growing in the garden
among the wild flowers

she Mumma she dig & she plant
nurtures her sod
tends her rose bush
in the garden pod

Just leap the garden fence
pluck the rose bud
bruk it ina the stem

oh no please no
was no self defence
oh no please no
without pretence
offered no defence
to a little little girl
called Nellie

Nellie couldn't understand
Mr. Thompson's hood
so harsh, so wrong
in such an offensive

Nellie plead, Nellie beg
Nellie plead, Nellie beg
but Mr. Thompson's hood
went right through her legs

323

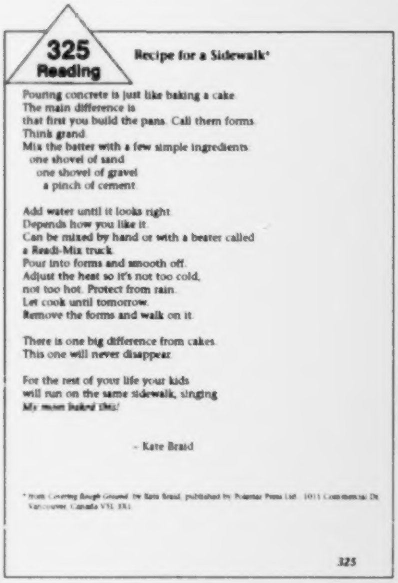
4. Writing and review

➤ Possible topics:
- Which poem in this section on sexual violence did you find the most disturbing and why?
- What can be done to put an end to sexual violence?
- Why did Nellie become a feminist?
- What does the word "feminist" mean to you?

E. Theme: Women's Work

1. Reading: Several poems

➤ Spend 15-30 minutes introducing, reading and discussing each of the following poems and their authors; all of the poems are from Tom Wayman's anthology of working poems, *Going for Coffee, Poetry on the Job.*
- "Recipe for a Sidewalk" by Kate Braid (page 325)
- "Picking Tomatoes" by Janet Gibson
- "Felton's Fragrances" by Gwen Hauser. (Discuss the word irony and how the poem is ironic. Find all the details in the poem that help build up the irony.)



325
Reading

Recipe for a Sidewalk*

Pouring concrete is just like baking a cake
The main difference is
that first you build the pans. Call them forms.
Think grand.
Mix the batter with a few simple ingredients:
  one shovel of sand
    one shovel of gravel
      a pinch of cement.

Add water until it looks right.
Depends how you like it.
Can be mixed by hand or with a beater called
a Readi-Mix truck.
Pour into forms and smooth off.
Adjust the heat so it's not too cold,
not too hot. Protect from rain.
Let cook until tomorrow.
Remove the forms and walk on it.

There is one big difference from cakes.
This one will never disappear.

For the rest of your life your kids
will run on the same sidewalk, singing
My mom baked this!

– Kate Braid

325

There are more poems in the chapter "Women and Work." Tom Wayman has also edited other, more recent, anthologies of work poems.

- "Where Things Come From" by Gwen Hauser. (Ask students to volunteer to take the roles of the policeman, the girl selling the flowers and the narrator. The parts can be acted out, as well as read, to add to the drama. This is a great deal of fun and guaranteed to bring the poem to life. You could also do a mini-lesson on the use of quotation marks using the same poem.)
- "The Two Policemen" by Gwen Hauser
- "The Housewife's Poem" by Bronwen Wallace

2. Panel discussion

The students should write the individual letters but the content and format can be decided by the group. Writing real letters is an excellent means of improving practical writing skills.

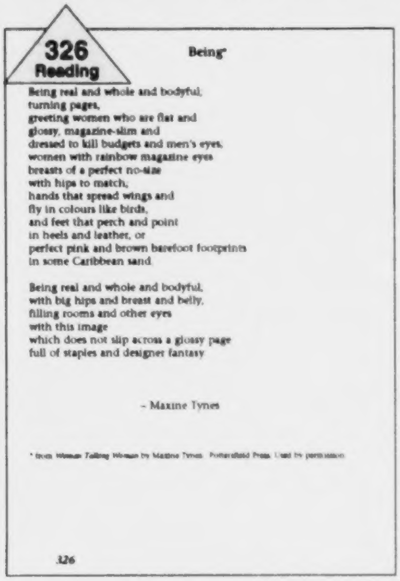
➤ Brainstorm as a group to identify a number of women in your community who do different types of work. Decide upon five or six of them to take part in a panel discussion about women's work.
➤ Prepare a short list of questions to ask the panel.
➤ Write letters of invitation to the selected women, including the list of questions with the letter.
➤ Hold an informal panel discussion.
➤ Send letters of appreciation to the guests.

F. Theme: Women's Bodies

1. Reading: Several poems

➤ Present the following poems:
  - "Fashion Kills" by Helen Potrebenko (from *Walking Slow)*
  - "Being" by Maxine Tynes (page 326)
  - "Giving Notice" by Mary Billy (page 327)

➤ Discuss anorexia and bulimia. Why are these women's diseases?
➤ As a group, brainstorm examples of societal pressures that push women to be thin and beautiful. Think of television commercials and advertisements in magazines. If you have done collages on images of women, look at them again.



326
Reading

Being*

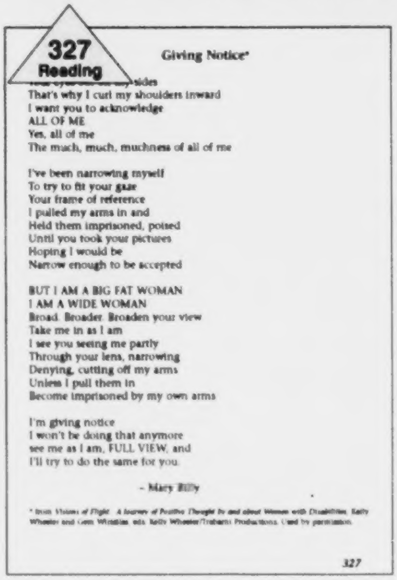
Being real and whole and bodyful,
turning pages,
greeting women who are flat and
glossy, magazine-slim and
dressed to kill budgets and men's eyes,
women with rainbow magazine eyes
breasts of a perfect no-size
with hips to match,
hands that spread wings and
fly in colours like birds,
and feet that perch and point
in heels and leather, or
perfect pink and brown barefoot footprints
in some Caribbean sand.

Being real and whole and bodyful,
with big hips and breast and belly,
filling rooms and other eyes
with this image
which does not slip across a glossy page
full of staples and designer fantasy

– Maxine Tynes

* from *Woman Talking Woman* by Maxine Tynes. Pottersfield Press. Used by permission.

326



327
Reading

Giving Notice*

sides
That's why I curl my shoulders inward
I want you to acknowledge
ALL OF ME
Yes, all of me
The much, much, muchness of all of me

I've been narrowing myself
To try to fit your gaze
Your frame of reference
I pulled my arms in and
Held them imprisoned, poised
Until you took your pictures
Hoping I would be
Narrow enough to be accepted

BUT I AM A BIG FAT WOMAN
I AM A WIDE WOMAN
Broad. Broader. Broaden your view
Take me in as I am
I see you seeing me partly
Through your lens, narrowing
Denying, cutting off my arms
Unless I pull them in
Become imprisoned by my own arms

I'm giving notice
I won't be doing that anymore
see me as I am, FULL VIEW, and
I'll try to do the same for you.

– Mary Billy

* from *Visions of Flight: A Journey of Positive Thought by and about Women with Disabilities*. Kelly Wheeler and Gem Wirszilas, eds. Kelly Wheeler/Trabants Productions. Used by permission.

327

2. Writing

➤ Ask everyone to write five or more positive statements about their own bodies in their journals or on paper.
➤ Prepare sheets of paper by writing the name of one student at the top of each sheet. Pass the sheets from student to student, and ask everyone to write one positive statement about each person as the appropriate sheet comes to them. Give each sheet back to the student whose name appears at the top.

You might ask students to do either one of the last two activities, or to do both.

G. Closure

1. Presentation

➤ Ask students to look over all of the poems in this chapter and choose one or two favourites.
➤ Ask students, in turn, to indicate their favourites and their reasons for choosing them. You might make an opportunity here to have the poems read aloud again.

This exercise could also be done as a writing activity.

2. Revisit old ideas

➤ Repeat the first activity of the first session (Writing, A-1) in which students write down their feelings about poetry.

➤ Return the original writings to the students who wrote them.

➤ Ask each student to compare his or her own two pieces of writing and discuss the changes as a group. How many have changed significantly? How have people's ideas changed?

3. Map work

➤ Pin the names of all the poets on a map of Canada:
- Nova Scotia: Maxine Tynes
- Ontario: Bronwen Wallace, Lillian Allen (originally from Jamaica), Gwen Hauser, Janet Gibson
- Manitoba: Dorothy Livesay, di brandt
- Saskatchewan: Judith Krause, Louise Halfe, Lorna Crozier
- Alberta: Leona Gom, Alice Lee
- British Columbia: Mary Billy, Kate Braid, Patricia Young
- Yukon: Linda McDonald

4. Guided discussion

➤ What have we learned about poetry and, in particular, Canadian women's poetry written in English?

➤ Bring out the cluster that was created by the group on the first day (Brainstorm, A-2). What can be added to this cluster now?

5. Writing

➤ Ask the students to reflect on their learning and provide feedback to the instructor by answering the following questions:
- What are your feelings about poetry now that we have completed this unit?
- Has your attitude towards poetry changed? If so, how?
- What did you like about this unit?
- What did you dislike?

Resources

(See the Bibliography for complete listings.)

Allen, Lillian. *Nothing But a Hero*
Allen, Lillian. *Women Do This Every Day: Selected Poems of Lillian Allen*
Braid, Kate *Covering Rough Ground*
brandt, di. *Mother, Not-Mother*
Crozier, Lorna. *Inventing the Hawk*
Halfe, Louise. *Bear Bones and Feathers*
Klein, Bonnie, dir. *Not a Love Story*
Krause, Judith. *Half the Sky*
Perreault, Jeanne and Sylvia Vance, eds. *Writing the Circle, an Anthology: Native Women of Western Canada*
Potrebenko, Helen. *Walking Slow*
Singer, Gail, dir. *Loved, Honoured and Bruised*
Tynes, Maxine. *Woman Talking Woman*
Wayman, Tom, ed. *Going for Coffee, Poetry on the Job*
Wheeler, Kelly and Gem Wirszilas, eds. *Visions of Flight: A Journey of Positive Thought by and about Women with Disabilities*
Young, Patricia. *The Mad and Beautiful Mothers*

Their Time

I hear you went to visit your gramma the other day.
She was glad to see you,
and greeted you with open arms and a smile.
"I'm glad to see you grandson, where have you been?"
"Oh, I'm working now, gramma. And you know how it is,
I have no time."
She fed you rabbit stew and bannock.
You ate quickly and told her she was a great cook.
You were still chewing your last piece of bannock as you
dashed out the door.
"See you, gramma!"
Her tiny figure stood in the doorway and watched long
after your truck disappeared around the corner.

Weeks flew by and became months before you reappeared
on her doorstep.
After she fed you, your gramma started to tell you a story.
She said, "Did I ever tell you about the time your grandpa
and I . . ."
Her words were lost somewhere between her mouth and your ears.
Your thoughts were elsewhere, a different place
a different person.
When she finished her story, you stood up and said,
"Gee, gramma, that was a good story."
She answered, "I wish I could see you more often, grandson."
You nodded and said, "Well you know how it is, gramma,
I have no time."

Last week, we lost a great person.
Your gramma passed on to a new life.
Our whole village showed up at her funeral,
to show their respect.
I saw you standing by her grave, your head hanging down.
You did not say one word, and yet I knew your thoughts.
They rang out loud and clear and shook the poplars and
the willows and echoed in the valley.
"Oh, just one more day gramma, give me just one more day
with you.
Let me hear one more story, gramma, and see your smiling
face, one more time."
The truth tore at your heart, and caused your tears to flow,
they fell to the ground and mixed with the freshly turned
gravel at your feet.
No more time.
I know your sadness, I know your sorrow.
It happened to you, it also happened to me, she was my grandmother,
too.
what is important?
Your time.
My time.
Whose time?
We must never forget – their time.

– Linda McDonald

From *Writing the Circle, an Anthology: Native Women of Western Canada* by Jeanne Perreault and Sylvia Vance, eds. NeWest. Used by permission.

Repetitions for My Mother

I want my mother to live forever,
I want her to continue baking bread,
hang the washing on the line, scrub
the floors for the lawyers in our town.
I want her fingers red with cold
or white with water. I want her
out of bed every holiday at six
to stuff the turkey, I want her to cut
the brittle rhubarb into pieces, to can
the crab apples, to grind the leftover roast
for shepherd's pie. I want her to grab me
and shake me out of my boots when I come home
late from school, I want her to lick her fingers
and wipe the dirt from my face. I want her to
put her large breast into my mouth,
I want her to tell me I am pretty, I am sweet,
I am the apple of her eye. I want her to knit and knit
long scarves of wool to wrap us in like
winding sheets all winter through. I want her
to sing with her terrible voice that rose above
the voices in the choir, to sing so loud
my head is full of her. I want her to carry
her weariness like a box of gifts up those stairs
to the room where I wait. Sleep, I will croon
at the edge of her bed, sleep, for tomorrow is
a holiday. Her hands will move in dream, breaking
and breaking bread. Not pain, not sorrow or old age
will make my mother weep. But the sting of onions
she must slice at six a.m., the bird forever
thawing in the kitchen sink, naked and white,
I want so much emptiness
for her to fill.

– Lorna Crozier

From *Inventing the Hawk* by Lorna Crozier. Used by permission of the Canadian Publishers, McClelland & Stewart, Toronto.

Step Son

for Kevin Steeves

For someone who never had a baby
I'm not doing too bad
sitting here in a high school auditorium just like
a real parent,
trying not to be too obvious when I wave back at
the sort of subtle flourishes of the first clarinet.
Positively dashing, this child not-of-my-body,
born of seven years of my care.
My heart dances with delight and even
gratitude, me who was always too impatient
to wait for a baby to grow. Now look at me,
blessed with a fifteen year old man
who bends over from six feet of solicitude
and honours me with the question asked only of friends,
How's it goin', dude?

– Kate Braid

From *Covering Rough Ground* by Kate Braid. Polestar Press Ltd., 1011 Commercial Dr., Vancouver, Canada V5L 3X1. Used by permission.

Hibernation

I will gather my children about me,
tell them it is now mid-October.
That they must play quietly
outside my bedroom door
until Spring.

I will ask them to refuse
all phone calls for the next six months,
parent/teacher conferences.
Explain to their father
when he returns in the evening
their mother is again dormant.

I will remind them to brush their teeth,
eat a carrot or apple at lunch.
Apologize for the unread stories at bedtime,
the soap not rinsed out of their hair.

I will explain that I retreat unwillingly
into the dark cave of my body.

As a last gesture of love I will tell them
the only thing I know for certain is
I cannot endure the sight
of another naked tree,
my god, the awful sky.

– Patricia Young

From *The Mad and Beautiful Mothers* by Patricia Young. Ragweed Press. Used by permission.

Loving Obscenities

She always wore
those stupid
Indian Affairs glasses
that looked like
the slanted eyes of
a Siamese cat.

He always walked
stooped
puffing on Export A
disguising his whisky breath
with spearmint gum.

She always wore
a black and blue shiner
every Friday and Saturday night.
Those stupid fist marks
of his drama attacks.

His eyes moved swiftly
examining every visible track
poking and stubbing his feet
at the sign of suspected
visiting lovers.

And
When they were together
Mother and Father
He would walk ahead
muttering his loving obscenities
while she walked softly behind
staring through his head
with those cheap
Indian Affairs glasses.

– Louise B. Halfe

From *Bear Bones and Feathers* by Louise B. Halfe. © Coteau Books 1995/CANCOPY.
Used by permission.

inside the bound woman is another, who loves to dance,
who rode the wind above a snowstorm, once, wild & high.

right now she is lying squashed, flat, in the basement of the
belly of the bound woman.

she is paralyzed from the neck down.

her mouth keeps opening keeps opening keeps opening, she
is trying to say something, to remember, she is trying to tell
us –

how she fell into the basement, how she was pushed into it,
under the slab of concrete, how long she's been lying there,
hardly breathing, who it was that pushed her there

in spite of her love for this man, in spite of her love

inside the paralyzed woman inside the bound woman is
another, whose breathing is proud & free, who stretches
past concrete, past paralyzed cells

whispering, remember me, me

for Diana

– di brandt

From *Prairie Fire*, Vol. 15, No. 1, Spring 1994, pg. 59. Used by permission.

Half the Sky

(for R.)

All she can see, with her left eye swollen shut, jaw wired.
She sits on the hospital steps, trying to decide whether to
spend the ten dollars in her purse on a taxi home or walk the
sixteen blocks, her leg still not quite healed from the last
time, ribs sore but not broken from his kicking. The cops
say leave or you're dead meat, the counsellors say don't go
back, but her kids want to go home. They're too old for the
shelter.

Tonight her face is as mottled as the evening sky, all
purple and pink, and she knows once she gets home, he'll
take the ten dollars or hock her wedding ring again. He's the only
man she's lived with, ever since she left home at
13 and now, at 29, her hair falling out, nails bitten to the
quick, her kids won't take sides, won't even call 911
if they think she started it.

– Judith Krause

From *Half the Sky* by Judith Krause. © Coteau Books 1995/CANCOPY. Used by permission.

Punishments

I remember most
being locked in the dark cellar,
the musty earth sealing around me,
the rustle of unseen creatures
in the monstrous corners,
my throat and fingers raw
from imploring the deaf door.
When we were older
the discipline was more direct,
always our images of him
the raised hand,
the freshly-cut switch,
the brutal belt.

That we learned to love him
is not, they tell us, surprising.
That we learned to understand
and to forgive
the tortured child in him
perhaps is.

– Leona Gom

From *The Collected Poems of Leona Gom*. Sono Nis Press. Used by permission.

The Child Who Walks Backwards

My next-door neighbour tells me
her child runs into things.
Cupboard corners and doorknobs
have pounded their shapes
into his face. She says
he is bothered by dreams,
rises in sleep from his bed
to steal through the halls
and plummet like a wounded bird
down the flight of stairs.

This child who climbed my maple
with the sureness of a cat,
trips in his room, cracks
his skull on the bedpost,
smacks his cheeks on the floor.
When I ask about the burns
on the back of his knee,
his mother tells me
he walks backwards
into fireplace grates
or sits and stares at flames
while sparks burn stars in his skin.

Other children write their names
on the casts that hold
his small bones.
His mother tells me
he runs into things,
walks backwards,
breaks his leg
while she lies
sleeping.

– Lorna Crozier

Fom *The Garden Going on Without Us* by Lorna Crozier. Used by permission of the Canadian Publishers, McClelland & Stewart, Toronto.

Not a Love Story

– in memory of Corinna

Men and women can't speak
to each other after seeing it.
How long till the anger burns down
and one turns to the other?

My friend is working on another movie –
child prostitution in Vancouver.
Is the right person for such a job
a woman shaking with rage?

Her younger sister died
on a train to Calgary, propped up
like luggage beside her pimp.

My friend says her sister
was the beautiful one, untouchable
as a white star.

I am stirring the soup.
There is nothing left for me to do.
I have painted myself into a warm
bright corner where my children
are well-fed and smiling.

She tells me at which theatre
it is playing, at what time,
that every woman should see it.
But I have refined the cowardly art
of editing my life.

I have heard enough stories
to know they are not all about love.

– Patricia Young

From *The Mad and Beautiful Mothers* by Patricia Young. Ragweed Press. Used by permission.

Nellie Belly Swelly

Nellie was thirteen
don't care 'bout no fellow
growing in the garden
among the wild flowers

she Mumma she dig & she plant
nurtures her sod
tends her rose bush
in the garden pod

lust leap the garden fence
pluck the rose bud
bruk it ina the stem

oh no please no
was no self defence
oh no please no
without pretence
offered no defence
to a little little girl
called Nellie

Nellie couldn't understand
Mr. Thompson's hood
so harsh, so wrong
in such an offensive

Nellie plead, Nellie beg
Nellie plead, Nellie beg
but Mr. Thompson's hood
went right through her legs

knowing eyes blamed her

Nellie disappeared from sight
news spread wide
as the months went by
psst psst psst Nellie belly swelly
Nellie belly swelly Nellie belly swelly
children skipped to Nellie's shame

Nellie returned from the night
gave up her dolls
and the rose bush died
Nellie Momma cried Nellie Momma cried
little Nellie no more child again

No sentence was passed
on this menacing ass
who plundered Nellie's childhood

In her little tiny heart
Nellie understood war

She mustered an army within her
strengthened her defence
and mined the garden fence

No band made a roll
skies didn't part
for this new dawn
in fact, nothing heralded it
when this feminist was born.

– Lillian Allen

From *Women Do This Every Day: Selected Poems of Lillian Allen.* Women's Press. Used by permission.

Recipe for a Sidewalk

Pouring concrete is just like baking a cake.
The main difference is
that first you build the pans. Call them forms.
Think grand.
Mix the batter with a few simple ingredients:
  one shovel of sand
    one shovel of gravel
      a pinch of cement.

Add water until it looks right.
Depends how you like it.
Can be mixed by hand or with a beater called
a Readi-Mix truck.
Pour into forms and smooth off.
Adjust the heat so it's not too cold,
not too hot. Protect from rain.
Let cook until tomorrow.
Remove the forms and walk on it.

There is one big difference from cakes.
This one will never disappear.

For the rest of your life your kids
will run on the same sidewalk, singing
My mom baked this!

– Kate Braid

From *Covering Rough Ground,* by Kate Braid. Polestar Press Ltd., 1011 Commercial Dr., Vancouver, Canada V5L 3X1. Used by permission.

Being

Being real and whole and bodyful;
turning pages,
greeting women who are flat and
glossy, magazine-slim and
dressed to kill budgets and men's eyes;
women with rainbow magazine eyes
breasts of a perfect no-size
with hips to match;
hands that spread wings and
fly in colours like birds,
and feet that perch and point
in heels and leather, or
perfect pink and brown barefoot footprints
in some Caribbean sand.

Being real and whole and bodyful;
with big hips and breast and belly,
filling rooms and other eyes
with this image
which does not slip across a glossy page
full of staples and designer fantasy.

– Maxine Tynes

From *Woman Talking Woman* by Maxine Tynes. Pottersfield Press. Used by permission.

Giving Notice

Your eyes cut off my sides
That's why I curl my shoulders inward
I want you to acknowledge
ALL OF ME
Yes, all of me
The much, much, muchness of all of me

I've been narrowing myself
To try to fit your gaze
Your frame of reference
I pulled my arms in and
Held them imprisoned, poised
Until you took your pictures
Hoping I would be
Narrow enough to be accepted

BUT I AM A BIG FAT WOMAN
I AM A WIDE WOMAN
Broad. Broader. Broaden your view
Take me in as I am
I see you seeing me partly
Through your lens, narrowing
Denying, cutting off my arms
Unless I pull them in
Become imprisoned by my own arms

I'm giving notice
I won't be doing that anymore
see me as I am, FULL VIEW, and
I'll try to do the same for you.

– Mary Billy

From *Visions of Flight: A Journey of Positive Thought by and about Women with Disabilities*, Kelly Wheeler and Gem Wirszilas, eds. Kelly Wheeler/Trabarni Productions. Used by permission.

12. Women's Ways of Learning

by Linda Shohet

I am the founder and director of The Centre for Literacy of Quebec, an independent charitable organization in Montréal that houses a public resource collection on all aspects of literacy and offers seminars and conferences for teachers, tutors and workplace educators. The priority issues for The Centre in the past few years have been literacy and health, literacy and technology, and literacy and women.

I have an Honours English B.A. and an M.A. from McGill University and a Ph.D. from Université de Montréal, and teach English at Dawson College in Montréal, specializing in developmental/basic writing and in writing about science and technology. Since 1984, I have worked in the field of school-based and adult literacy, editing Literacy Across the Curriculum, *a newsletter that circulates widely in North America, and present frequently at conferences.*

Currently, I am serving a second two-year term as president of Literacy Partners of Quebec, the provincial coalition of English-language literacy groups, and am the Quebec director of the Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women. Although I have served on many local and national boards of education, literacy and women's organizations, I have never had a richer experience than in working with the group of women who produced this manual.

photo: Peter Cashin

Introduction

Thinking about how people learn is not new. In Classical Greece, Socrates developed oral dialogues to promote thoughtful learning. Rabbinic scholars taught close reading, questioning and interpretation of text. Mediaeval Christian clerics taught through the copying of classical texts and illuminating manuscripts. In every culture where learning has been valued, teachers have thought about this question: How do people learn? But the learners were always assumed to be men. More recently, modern psychologists have studied people in actual learning situations and have developed theories of learning. But in the past two decades feminist researchers have pointed out that almost all the research underpinning even these modern theories was carried out mainly with men and then applied to "people."

As we have begun to ask questions about the specific ways in which women learn and know, and about how these ways may differ from men's ways of learning and knowing, new models are becoming available.

While it is clear that we are still at an embryonic stage of understanding, some patterns are beginning to emerge. I want to outline a few of these patterns and acknowledge the women who have made them apparent and have influenced me. On ways of learning and knowing, they include Carol Gilligan and Mary Field Belenky and associates; on women in literacy, they are Kathleen Rockhill, Hannah Fingeret, Jenny Horsman and Betty-Ann Lloyd and associates; on women in science and technology, they are Evelyn Keller and Cheris Kramarae. On ways of communicating, Deborah Tannen has been central.

Susan Imel and Sandra Kerka have compiled an excellent bibliography, *Women and Literacy: A Guide to the Literature and Resources*. It includes sections on these topics, among others: program development; the interplay of power, race and class; women as learners; instructional approaches and curriculum development. The annotations are clear and useful.

It is as impossible to make claims about all women as it is about all men. There are differences among women as there are differences among men, and between men and women. Both women and men stand at all points on the spectrum of learning and knowing positions, but there seem to be some particular concentrations of gender at certain points and some predispositions for ways of knowing and learning that follow.

Becoming aware of these patterns has influenced me as a learner and has changed my work as a teacher. This awareness has become the catalyst for many of the classroom activities and ideas in this chapter. I have drawn heavily on several assumptions:

- That in terms of moral development, more women tend to organize around the idea of responsibility and caring for others while more men tend to organize around the idea of their personal rights.
- That in terms of self-identity, more women tend to be rooted in a sense of connection and relatedness to people and places, while more men tend to define themselves in terms of separation and autonomy.
- That women, more than men, have traditionally tended to be silenced in public places and in places of learning, and that women who are less literate tend to be among the most silenced.
- That most models of learning have assumed that learners were men more often than women.
- That most models of learning have favoured a text-based, teacher-centred transmission of objective knowledge that excludes many non-traditional learners, both men and women.

There are ambiguities that run through all these claims, and the researchers who have provided evidence for them have acknowledged that no claim can be taken as a statement of description for every individual. So, there are women who prefer solitary autonomous learning and men who favour connected knowing.

However, in general, I believe that the claims on which I have built this chapter can support alternative ways of organizing learning that are woman-positive without being negative towards men. In fact, because I have rarely had the opportunity to teach in a women-only setting, I have used many of these ideas in mixed gender classrooms and have generated some honest, sometimes charged, occasionally tense, but usually exciting, learning for all.

The ideas focus on talking, seeing, drawing, moving, singing, dancing, watching and listening, as well as on reading and writing. They validate everyday habits and include media and popular culture, computers and video games. They are designed to promote reflection, to create opportunities to take voice and to have fun. They reflect multiple ways of learning.

Although some researchers disagree, there is a consensus building among practitioners that in the population of adults with weak literacy skills, there are many with some type of learning difficulty or disability (LD) which was often unrecognized in their school years. Unfortunately, few literacy and ABE programs have either the resources or the expertise to diagnose and respond to these problems. However, recently various agencies in Canada, the U.S. and Britain have begun to write about the needs of adults and to produce rapid assessments and classroom strategies for practitioners working with these adults. Later in the chapter you will find a list of some organizations and publications which offer invaluable resources on learning disabilities and adult literacy. (See Resources, pages 345 – 346.)

In the main text of my chapter, I have avoided specific sections on learning disabilities or problems. One of my assumptions is that many of those who have other ways of learning will be accommodated by the diversity of approaches suggested.

A. Becoming Our Own Experts

1. A learning style profile

➤ Ask learners to take 10 minutes to think about the following questions, making notes if they like:

- What do you do best? Make a list. (The list could include any skill that you have, any sport or instrument you play, any hobby at which you are very good – hair styling, sewing, mechanics, etc.)
- How long have you been doing the things you listed? Note each one separately.
- How did you learn to do each of these things? Again, note each one separately. It is possible that they were learned in different ways, for example, in a class, on a team, from a parent, relative or friend, or from a book.
- From all the learning experiences you have had in your life, including school, how do you think you learn best: by seeing something, by hearing about it, by watching someone else do it, by doing it yourself or by reading about it?

2. Paired interview: Experts

This exercise is one of two paired interviews that help students think about themselves as learners, as knowers and as experts.

➤ Ask students, in pairs, to interview one another about learning history and learning style, using the questions from the previous exercise.

➤ Ask students, in turn, to introduce their partners to the group as experts at the things they do best.

➤ As students are introduced, keep notes on an overhead transparency or on a flip chart or blackboard to demonstrate the many different ways that people learn. The exercise also shows how much expertise we can identify in one room.

➤ Photocopy and share the list of experts and put a large copy on a bulletin board.

Eventually, as the class develops into a community, the members should be encouraged to demonstrate their skills and even barter lessons among themselves.

3. Reading: "'How do you feel?' '. . . Stupid . . .'"

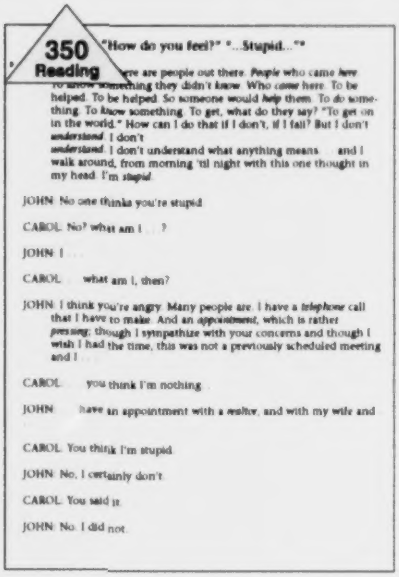
➤ Introduce the excerpt from *Oleanna*, a play about teachers and students and learning and schools and society (pages 351 – 352).

➤ Read through the scene a few times.

➤ Ask two students to play the parts of John, the teacher, and Carol, the student.

➤ When you have heard several pairs of students play the parts, talk about their reactions. Some questions to consider:

- Have you ever felt like Carol?
- What is John trying to do here?



350 Reading

"How do you feel?" "...Stupid..."*

ere are people out there. *People* who came *here* to know something they didn't *know*. Who *came* here. To be helped. To be helped. So someone would *help* them. To *do* something. To *know* something. To get, what do they say? "To get on in the world." How can I do that if I don't, if I fail? But I don't *understand*. I don't *understand*. I don't understand what anything means . . . and I walk around, from morning 'til night with this one thought in my head. I'm *stupid*.

JOHN: No one thinks you're stupid.

CAROL: No? what am I . . . ?

JOHN: I . . .

CAROL: . . . what am I, then?

JOHN: I think you're angry. Many people are. I have a *telephone* call that I have to make. And an *appointment*, which is rather *pressing*; though I sympathize with your concerns and though I wish I had the time, this was not a previously scheduled meeting and I . . .

CAROL: . . . you think I'm nothing . . .

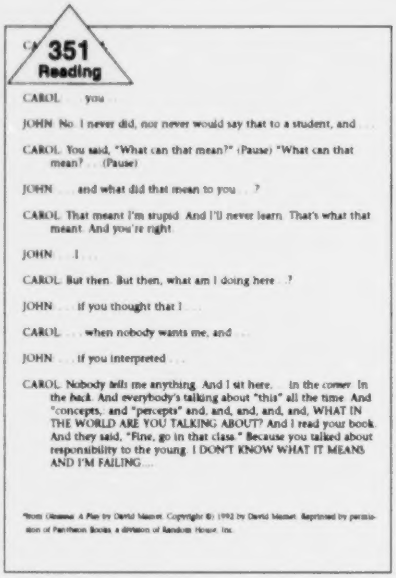
JOHN: . . . have an appointment with a *realtor*, and with my wife and . . .

CAROL: You think I'm stupid.

JOHN: No, I certainly don't.

CAROL: You said it.

JOHN: No. I did not.



351 Reading

CAROL: . . . you . . .

JOHN: No. I never did, nor never would say that to a student, and . . .

CAROL: You said, "What can that mean?" (Pause) "What can that mean?" . . . (Pause)

JOHN: . . . and what did that mean to you . . . ?

CAROL: That meant I'm stupid. And I'll never learn. That's what that meant. And you're right.

JOHN: . . . I . . .

CAROL: But then. But then, what am I doing here . . . ?

JOHN: . . . if you thought that I . . .

CAROL: . . . when nobody wants me, and . . .

JOHN: . . . if you interpreted . . .

CAROL: Nobody *tells* me anything. And I sit here . . . in the *corner*. In the *back*. And everybody's talking about "this" all the time. And "concepts," and "percepts" and, and, and, and, and, WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? And I read your book. And they said, "Fine, go in that class." Because you talked about responsibility to the young. I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT MEANS AND I'M FAILING . . .

*From *Oleanna: A Play* by David Mamet. Copyright © 1992 by David Mamet. Reprinted by permission of Pantheon Books, a division of Random House, Inc.

This play is a powerful and ambiguous study of power, sexual politics and violence acted out through a series of meetings between a male college professor and a female student. She comes to see him because she does not understand his class, and he is unable to answer her because he does not understand her situation or her needs. The drama of their first meeting can spark recognition among many students who can see a version of themselves in Carol.

You might go on, with your students, to brainstorm some subjects from their daily lives that could be dramatized. Have them improvise scenes. If any of the scenes is especially well done, write them down as scripts and give other students the chance to act them.

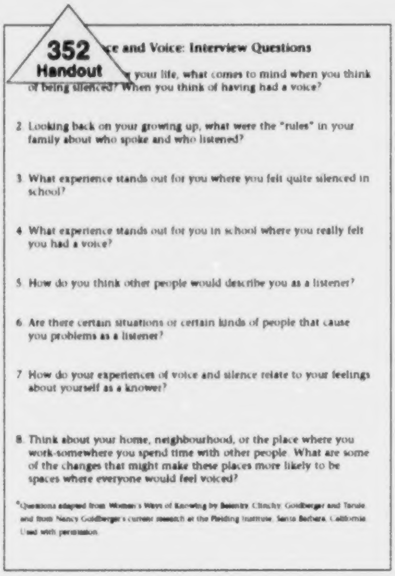
Some literacy programs have developed projects around drama, for example, *Setting the Stage for Literacy: An Anthology of Student Scripts*, by the Public Library of Brookline and Adult Literacy Resource Institute.

4. Paired interview: Silence and voice

You can adapt the questions for less experienced students and can help them tape the answers rather than write them. You may need to explain certain ideas, such as what it means to take voice or speak out. You may want to explain that "rules" in a household can be explicit or implicit.

Answering these questions, especially about places in their lives where they are silenced, can lead students to disclose past or present experiences of violence and abuse. For some suggestions about preparing yourself to deal with such disclosures, see "Responding to Disclosures of Abuse in Women's Lives" (page 15).

➤ Give students the handout "Interview Questions: Silence and Voice" (page 352).



352
Handout

ce and Voice: Interview Questions

your life, what comes to mind when you think of being silenced? When you think of having had a voice?

2 Looking back on your growing up, what were the "rules" in your family about who spoke and who listened?

3 What experience stands out for you where you felt quite silenced in school?

4 What experience stands out for you in school where you really felt you had a voice?

5 How do you think other people would describe you as a listener?

6 Are there certain situations or certain kinds of people that cause you problems as a listener?

7 How do your experiences of voice and silence relate to your feelings about yourself as a knower?

8 Think about your home, neighbourhood, or the place where you work-somewhere you spend time with other people. What are some of the changes that might make these places more likely to be spaces where everyone would feel voiced?

*Questions adapted from Women's Ways of Knowing by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule and from Nancy Goldberger's current research at the Fielding Institute, Santa Barbara, California. Used with permission.

➤ Ask them to take 20 minutes to interview one another in pairs, using the questions as a guide, making notes if they like.

➤ Share the answers with the whole group.

➤ Keep notes from the sharing session on an overhead transparency or on a flip chart or blackboard to demonstrate the many ways that people are silenced and the ways that experience affects their sense of themselves as knowers.

Researcher Mary Belenky has noted the link between violence and silence, taking violence in its broadest sense – physical, emotional, psychological. She and a colleague have developed this interview to stimulate reflection on the connections between being silenced, being voiced and seeing oneself as a knower.

They define "being silenced" as the experience of someone fearing to speak because she may appear stupid, because she doubts her own authority, because she fears being attacked, physically or otherwise. They define "taking voice" as the experience of gaining the confidence to speak out about personal or public concerns. People may be silenced or given the possibility of taking voice in many situations – at home, in schools, in community settings, at work.

This paired interview, like the previous one, helps students think about themselves as learners, as knowers and as experts. In this case, the focus is on the many instances of being silenced that all of us experience through life. My own classroom experience using this interview has shown that men often have similar experiences to women, though in different contexts.

B. Drawing: A Link to Literacy

1. Drawing and writing

➤ Ask students to think about something that has importance or meaning for them. It could be an idea, a feeling, a memory, a dream, a nightmare.

➤ Ask them to draw a picture and write about the same idea. They can write first and then draw, or draw first and then write. There are no rules, except that the writing and drawing should be personal.

➤ You might want to show them the examples from other students, from *Drawing: A Link to Literacy* by Catherine Bates and Linda Shohet (pages 347 – 349).

➤ Invite students to share their drawings and writings with the group.

➤ Some questions to consider:

   - What happens when you can see an idea in a picture?
   - Do you prefer to read about an idea? hear about an idea? see an idea?
   - Can you learn from pictures?

One colleague has used this idea in intermediate ABE and ESL classes very effectively. She uses student examples as the prompt; she reads the writings and shows the drawings. Then she gives her students the chance to produce their own works. Finally, she and the students choose a selection of work and produce a student publication with a copy for each member of the class.

The link between drawing and writing is usually confined to early childhood learning. The main research on adults' drawing outside of art classes has been done in art therapy. There has, however, recently been some thinking about using drawing and other forms of visual arts in regular learning situations. It is especially useful in literacy and second-language learning because it validates visual learners, gives those with less skill in language another form of expression and recognizes the graphic quality of letters and print on a page.

Extending the link, researchers have pointed out that in the early stages of reading and writing, print and picture are part of a complementary whole. Giving older learners a chance to draw as part of their language experience can facilitate language learning, vocabulary growth and more. Many low-achieving learners have been shown to be highly visual. For poor readers and slow learners, drawing provides a way of literally "seeing" words, another way of getting to meaning.

This approach is adaptable for all levels of learners and for many different contexts. It can be used for a single assignment or series of assignments designed to help students reflect on their own ways of learning. The drawings and writings should be ungraded and unjudged; they should be introduced only after a teacher or tutor has established a relationship of trust with the students and they have come to know one another. The approach can also be used as the introduction for a focused assignment in which you identify a theme or topic .

2. Postcards: Inside-out

➤ Set out a selection of postcards of museum paintings.

➤ Ask students to choose a card they like.

➤ Ask them to pretend that they are the character (or one of the characters) in the painting. Some questions to consider:

- Why are you there?
- What are you doing?
- How do you like the setting – your clothes, the landscape, the objects around you?
- What is happening outside the frame of the picture?

➤ Ask them to use some of the information they have just discovered to write a story about their characters.

For students who are not yet able to write a full story, the exercise can be done orally as a narrative. For weak writers, the writing is still possible because no one sees it. The writer reads her work aloud and keeps it. For advanced students, this exercise can lead to a small research assignment based on looking up information in the library about the artist.

➤ Once everyone has a story, ask the group to form a large circle, and ask for volunteers to share their stories, passing the picture around the circle as they read. No one is forced to read, but usually many want to.

Variations:

- The exercise can be more focused if you choose pictures around a particular theme. For example, I have chosen a set of pictures by Frida Kahlo of women suffering. One could do this with such themes as children, family, joy or courage.
- In a mixed gender group, you can offer paintings of men and women and ask the men to choose pictures of women and vice versa. This leads to some very interesting constructions of meaning.

Another way of using the visual, this assignment calls on students' observation skills and imagination. I have not yet found a group that did not get into it with delight. Students who normally write as little as possible are often so caught up that they have to be stopped after 20-30 minutes. The stories are amazing: some are pure fantasy; some are reflections of self; some are mirrors of popular soap opera plot lines. The mark of excitement is that every time I have done this exercise, the students always ask to keep the postcard.

This assignment involves you starting and maintaining a collection of museum postcards. They are inexpensive and when you use single copies in class, there is no problem with copyright. Museum gift shops will often send you selected postcards if you order and prepay for them from a catalogue of their holdings. Find the addresses of museums in centres closest to you. The Ontario Gallery of Art is one museum which will mail postcards. If these postcards are not readily accessible in your area, you can order them from museum shops in large cities. (There is a list of sources on page 346.)

An alternative to postcards is a collection of graphic greeting cards with compelling pictures and little or no text. These cost more than postcards, but you can ask friends and family to save used ones and you choose the ones that you think will work best.

Additional materials: Many of the materials are simply "found" in homes, museums, book stores, etc. Watch for remaindered art calendars around the end of March each year. You can often pick up 12 first-quality reproductions for as little as $2 to $3.

This exercise was adapted from an assignment series developed by Joseph Trimmer at Ball State University, presented at The Conference on College Composition and Communications in March 1994.

C. Learning from Roseanne and Oprah

1. Guided discussion

➤ Some questions to consider:
  - Where do you get your information about the world?
  - Do you watch TV? What kinds of programs do you watch?
  - Which are your favourite TV programs?
  - Do you often listen to experts? Who are the experts? Are they people you know or people you hear on the radio or people you see on television?
  - Who is your favourite woman on a TV show? What do you like about her?

2. A television survey

➤ Give learners the TV survey form (page 353).

➤ Ask them to spend time watching TV and making observations.

➤ At the end of the week, share the observations learners have made.

353
Handout

TV Observations

some time to watch six different kinds of TV shows and notice the women who read the news or play the parts. Keep track of any things you notice about these different kinds of programs.

On a newscast (such as "The Journal" or the local 6:00 p.m. news)

In a commercial for cars

In a commercial for soap

In a soap opera (such as "General Hospital")

In a sitcom (such as "Roseanne")

In a drama (such as "ER" or "NYPD Blue")

In a talk show (such as "Oprah")

3. Additional activities

➤ Observe and discuss the presentation of women's bodies and ideas about fitness as portrayed in sports broadcasts and fitness programs.

➤ Observe and discuss the issues of women's health and diseases as portrayed in medical reporting and on commercials for medications.

➤ Ask the women to name other ways they see women represented in the media.

Television is a powerful medium and a source of information for most people today. Although teachers and literacy workers have traditionally seen TV as an enemy of literacy and as a medium to be condemned or avoided, it is a permanent presence in North American homes. For people who do not read well, and for many who do, TV is a primary source of information which requires a new kind of literacy to make meaning of its messages. Media literacy involves showing people how to "read" TV – to understand how information is packaged, how cameras, timing, scripting, images, music and words combine to make meaning in ways different from, and the same as, meaning in print-based messages.

This series of exercises acknowledges the importance of TV in students' lives and asks them to reflect on what and how they learn from TV. The exercises have students engaging in critical watching over a period of time. The results should be collected and discussed freely in a non-judgmental way. Among the subjects that always come up are sexual stereotyping and violence. Questions about choice and censorship often come into play. Questions about when and why someone would go to a written text for the same information also usually arise naturally as part of the discussion.

None of these questions should be used as an excuse to attack TV as an enemy of reading. If you are teaching a unit or course on media literacy, you can develop a series of lessons from *Screening Images: Ideas for Media Education* by Chris M. Worsnop. Although this book was written for school use, it has countless excellent ideas that can be adapted to any setting and any level.

In the context of this chapter, I have included this segment as a way of exploring how and what women learn from TV today and how it affects and influences family life.

D. Technology for Learning

There is considerable concern today about women feeling alienated by the new technologies. Among the issues, critics worry about access to training, about access to hardware and software, and about job loss as the workplace is restructured and traditional work options disappear. On the other hand, advocates point out the democratizing possibilities of computers, the ability of women to speak "anonymously" on-line and the new opportunities for learning made available to those with various learning difficulties or physical disabilities. There are clearly many issues to ponder in the years ahead, but while the debate continues, teachers in real places are using technologies in new ways to teach and to lead learners into the world of the future.

New technologies, such as computers or CD-ROM, offer exciting possibilities when used thoughtfully in conjunction with more traditional ways of learning. The ideas presented here illustrate one way of integrating technology into a standard family literacy program. Any type of literacy program could be similarly restructured.

The activities in this section are adapted from *Family Literacy Computer Activities* by Virginia Tardaewether, a family literacy instructor in Salem, Oregon. Becoming familiar with and comfortable using a computer is one goal for these ESL and ABE parents, the majority of whom are mothers. Some of these activities are only for the child, some only for the adult and some for both playing together. Each has a different purpose and a different time line. Look at them as models and develop your own exercises using software with which you are familiar.

If you are just getting started, Virginia Tardaewether has produced an entire book of activities with resource lists included. (See Resources.)

1. Using children's computer software

➤ Ask students to work with a partner (perhaps a child) and give each an assignment that involves working with the programs you have available to teach children reading and writing.

➤ Ask students, in pairs, to open a children's games program, and complete the following assignment:

- Choose three games.
- With your partner, play each game long enough to understand how it works.
- Using the word processor, describe what a child would learn from each game.
- Save to your disk, print it and turn it in.

➤ Ask students to work with a child, and complete the following assignment:

- Let the child pick a software program to play.
- Play for a while. Have fun!
- Write down the kinds of things you talked about while you were playing together.

2. Draw

➤ Ask students, in pairs, to use a drawing program to draw a picture.

➤ Ask them to fill in a pattern in one or more sections of the drawing, and to print the final drawing.

3. Class book

➤ Ask students to select a favourite song, chant, nursery rhyme or story.

➤ Ask them to write the words and illustrate their pieces using the computer and scanner.

➤ Use a selection from each student to create a class book for students to take home and share with their families.

The class will need to cooperate so that the same item is not used more than once. Students may decide to illustrate more than one item if they have more than one favourite that no one else has selected.

4. Pie chart

➤ Ask students to keep track of particular class activities, such as their choices for "free time" activities, for a month.

Example:

Reading	5
Puzzles	2
Writing	4
Computers	3
Absent	3
Total	**17**

They might go on to make another graph that shows the combined choices of all the students.

➤ Ask them to use software to make pie charts or circle graphs that show the information.

5. Create a book for a child

➤ Ask students to create a book for a child. They might make up a story or use a folk tale, fairy tale or any story that is not copyrighted. They might make a picture- or number-book, or one that shows colours or shapes.

Bring in instructions for making books – pop-up books, big books, felt or fabric books, and so on.

6. Self-help tips

➤ Ask students to format two sheets of paper, and complete the following steps:

- On the first page list all of the things that bugged you this week.
- On the second page write down all the things that you can brag about this week. (Include writing this on a computer.)
- Print them both.
- On your way out the door, tear up your bug sheet and put it in the trash.
- Take your brag sheet home with extra paper, if you need it.
- Put your brag sheet up where everyone can see it.
- Ask family members to do the same exercise, and put their brag sheets up with yours.

This exercise was sent on-line from Indianapolis Public Even Start Family Literacy Program.

To find affordable software that you like and want to use, contact provincial literacy offices to ask about software evaluations they may have conducted. You may be able to share materials with other organizations or access shareware through bulletin board requests. More and more is becoming available. The National Center on Adult Literacy (NCAL) in 1995 created a database of software evaluations for literacy and ABE. They list only American software, some of which could be adaptable. There is also an evaluation available from Project Miranda in the U.K. for British products. (It includes some American materials.) To date, there is no comprehensive listing and evaluation of Canadian materials, but individuals are currently working on projects, and information can be found through the National Literacy Secretariat or by accessing the National Adult Literacy Database (NALD). (For addresses, see Resources on page 346.)

E. Music and Dance as Meaning

1. Listen to some music

➤ Bring in a selection of tapes or music videos with women as the performers and women as the subjects. Choose a wide range from rock, country, folk, opera, etc.
➤ Listen and watch together and give students time to reflect on the meaning conveyed by the words, the setting, the music and the video images.

2. Share some music

➤ Ask students to bring in a tape of favourite music and share it in groups of three.
➤ Some questions to consider:

- Did any of you like the same kind of music?
- Did all the tapes have words?
- Did some people prefer instruments alone?
- What do you like? the rhythm? the sound? the words? the mood?
- Does music tell stories for you?
- How is music different from books?

3. Dance

➤ Bring in assorted drawings of dance, for example, Degas and Matisse paintings, Miriam Shapiro postcards of "Dancers," George Segal's sculpture, "The Dancers."
➤ Invite students to choose a drawing to comment on. Use the directions from the postcard assignment, in Section B-2, above.
➤ Ask students to collect pictures of people dancing, either alone or together. These can be photographs, art reproductions, newspaper clippings or whatever they can find. Some questions to consider:

- Do you like to dance?
- Is dance important in your family? your community?
- How does dancing create meaning?
- Compare dancing and the written word. Which is more powerful? Which gives a clearer message?

4. Performance

➤ There are almost always students in the class who sing, either solo or in a choir, or who play an instrument. There may be some who know particular kinds of dancing they would be willing to demonstrate or teach. Give them time to perform if they are comfortable.

Flamenco at 5:15 is an NFB film that shows a group of professional ballet dancers taking a class in flamenco dancing. A colleague of mine has used it often with students who enjoy this glimpse into the process of creating dance, as well as the irresistible rhythms

Knowing the cultural context of your students is important; for example, in First Nations tradition, dance is a form of worship, a way of communing with natural forces. Western culture has tended to remove dance to a theatrical spectacle.

Classroom exercises around dance and music are often a way into a world of meaning where the students have more authority. They are wonderful sources of group discussion about ways of making meaning other than through language. They can lead to writing, drawing, and music-making opportunities.

Resources

(See the Bibliography for complete listings.)

Bates, Catherine and Linda Shohet. *Drawing: A Link to Literacy*
Belenky, Mary Field, et al. *Women's Ways of Knowing*
Imel, Susan and Sandra Kerka. *Women and Literacy: A Guide to the Literature and Resouces*
Mamet, David. *Oleanna: A Play*
Norris, Joye and Sheila Wright. *Literacy Through the Arts*
This is a preliminary report on a partnership between Wake Technical Community College, Raleigh, N.C. and the N.C. Arts Council, which gives details of a project funded by the National Endowment for Arts and the North Carolina Arts Council; the project put a playwright in ABE classrooms.
Public Library of Brookline and Adult Literacy Resource Institute. *Setting the Stage for Literacy: An Anthology of Student Scripts*
Samaritan House PAR Group. *Where There Is Life, There Is Hope*
A group of literacy students worked on a participatory research project about discrimination, asking "What does it mean to us and how has it affected our lives?" The book includes stories by participants, reflections from the animator and a bibliography.
Tardaewether, Virginia. *Family Literacy Computer Activities*
Worsnop, Chris M. *Screening Images: Ideas for Media Education*

Film

Flamenco at 5:15

Learning Disabilities and Literacy

The Learning Disabilities Association of Canada has published several books including *Literacy and Learning Disabilities, A Handbook for Literacy Workers,* by June Karassik, and *Bringing Literacy Within Reach: Identifying and Teaching Adults with Learning Disabilities.* Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, 323 Chapel Street, Suite 200, Ottawa, Ont. K1N 7Z2, Tel: (613) 238-5721. Fax: (613) 235-5391

Provincial learning disabilities associations often have useful information available to purchase or borrow.

The National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center, supported by the National Institute for Literacy in Washington, has a series of brief publications that can be reproduced by practitioners with acknowledgement. They include:

- "Adults with Learning Disabilities: Definitions and Issues'
- "Screening for Adults with Learning Disabilities: The Role of the Practitioner in the Assessment Process"
- "TECHNIQUES: Working with Adults with Learning Disabilities"

- "LINKAGES", a series of newsletters on themes such as self-esteem, social skills issues, workplace literacy: employment issues for the adult learner with learning disabilities.

The National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center (NALLDC),
Academy for Educational Development, 1875 Connecticut Avenue NW,
Washington, DC 20009-1202

The National Council for Educational Technology (NCET) in the UK has produced some materials on the use of technology for adults with learning disabilities. One of the most useful is *I.T. for Adults with Dyslexia* by Sally McKeown.
NCET Sales, Milburn Hill Road, Science Park, Coventry, England, CV4 7JJ,
Tel: 011-44-1203-416669. Fax: 011-44-1203-411418

Art Reproductions

For arts materials specifically focused on women, contact The National Museum of Women in the Arts, 1250 New York Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20005-3920

Stamps of great works of art are available from STAMP, 16, rue de Reilly, 75012 Paris. These are stamp-sized reproductions which can be used for " miniature" assignments.

The Women's Bookstore in Toronto also has art postcards by and about women. They have a vibrantly coloured postcard reproduction of a painting by artist/teacher Septima Clark about the power of literacy. They will mail. 73 Harbord Street, Toronto, Ont. M5S 1G4, Tel: (416) 977-8744

Other women's bookstores in major centres across the country also sell cards and calendars. Check book stores in the yellow pages for addresses or phone numbers.

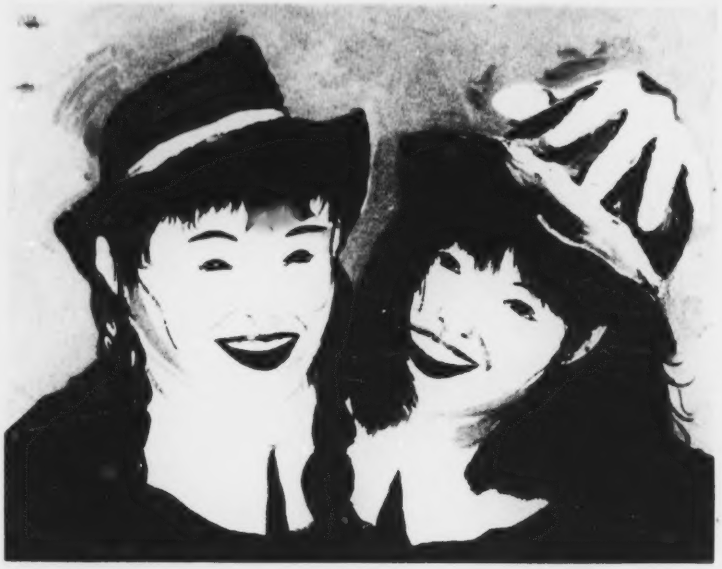
Other Useful Addresses

The National Center on Adult Literacy (NCAL), University of Pennsylvania,
3910 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104-3111

Project Miranda, School of Education, University of London, Bedford Way, London,
England

National Literacy Secretariat, 15 Eddy Street, Room 10E10, Hull, Que. K1A 1K5.
Tel: (819) 953-5280. Fax: (819) 953-8076

National Adult Literacy Database (NALD) Scovil House, 703 Brunswick Street,
Fredericton, NB E3B 1H8. Tel: (506) 457-6900. Fax: (506) 457-6910.
E-mail: ramsey@nbnet.nb.ca



▲

You are my best friend because you feel so much like home to me...
that feeling that someone cares;
that feeling of welcome;
that like sight of home always brings.

S.M.I.

▶

The clouds hang heavy with their burden
the low rumble of the thunder
echoes across the miles.
The moon and stars are smothered
by the great black wings of the storm.
Is it raining where you are?
The rising wind rises,
and the last few leaves of autumn
begin the storm's strange ritualistic dance,
and the first few drops of rain
kiss the feet of Mother Earth
My blessing to you, dear friend
may the sun be shining upon you,
may it light your prescious face
while I stand here quietly
and contented –
in the blessed heart of the storm,
in the rain.
My friend, how I wish you
were here
to call me into the warmth
and out of the storm.

C.G.

From *Drawing: A Link to Literacy*, compiled by Catherine Bates and Linda Shohet. The Centre for Literacy, Montréal, 1993. Reprinted with permission.

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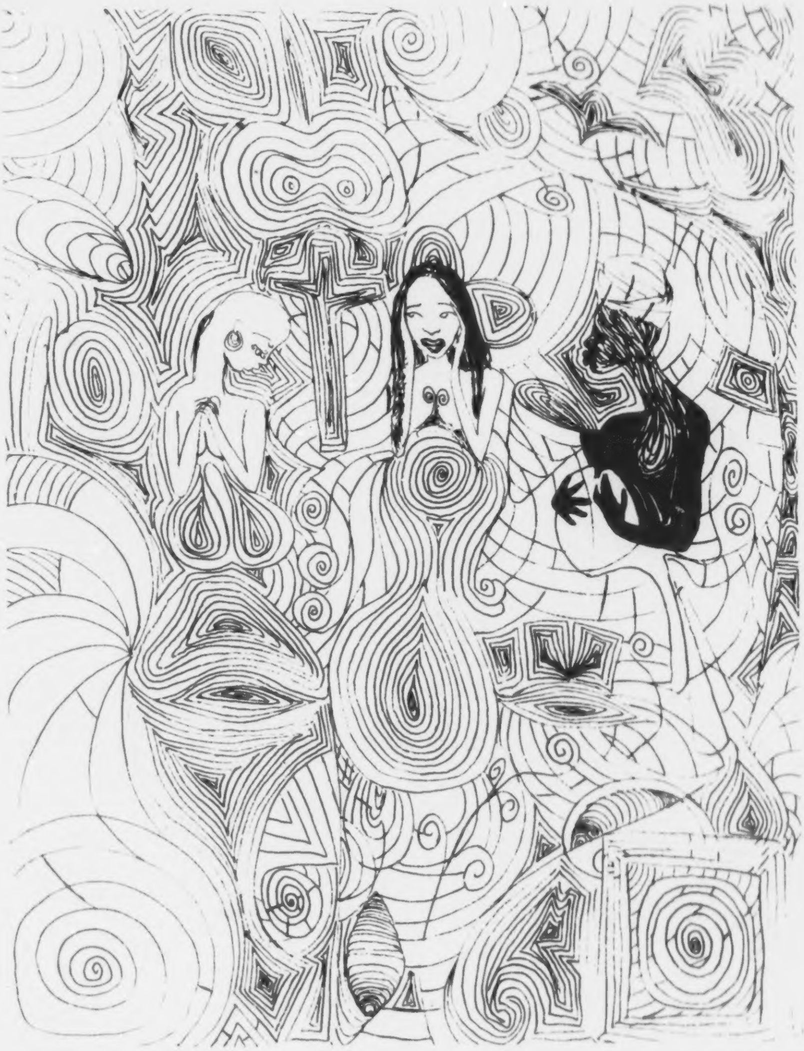

▲
Myriam, 19, is pregnant
Nancy, 14, is with child
Phebee, 20, will soon give birth to her son
Jenny had an abortion
God is sending me a message by making all my
female relatives pregnant: Abstinence!!
Eyes everywhere, what will the neighbors think?
What will Rev. Evens think, say?
Pressure, time: Is it too late to get an abortion?
What if ...What if I die?...

J. V.

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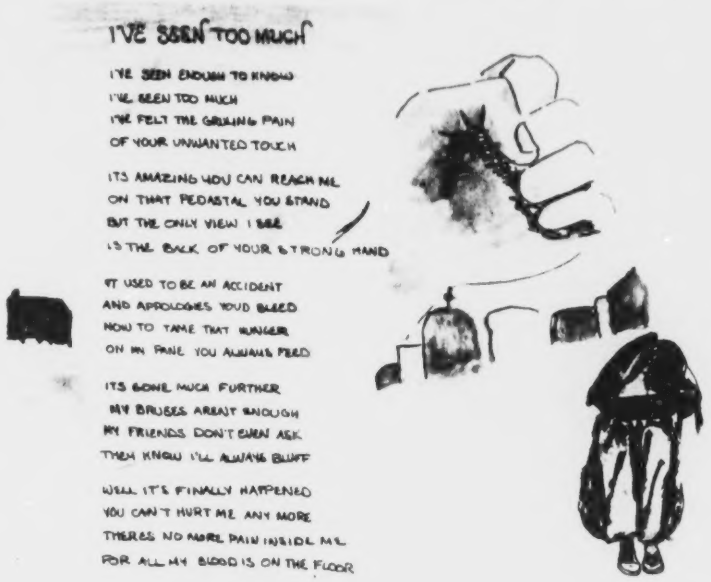

I'VE SEEN TOO MUCH

I'VE SEEN ENOUGH TO KNOW
I'VE SEEN TOO MUCH
I'VE FELT THE GRULING PAIN
OF YOUR UNWANTED TOUCH

ITS AMAZING YOU CAN REACH ME
ON THAT PEDASTAL YOU STAND
BUT THE ONLY VIEW I SEE
IS THE BACK OF YOUR STRONG HAND

IT USED TO BE AN ACCIDENT
AND APPOLOGIES YOUD BLEED
NOW TO TAME THAT HUNGER
ON MY PANE YOU ALWAYS FEED

ITS GONE MUCH FURTHER
MY BRUSES ARENT ENOUGH
MY FRIENDS DON'T EVEN ASK
THEY KNOW I'LL ALWAYS BLUFF

WELL IT'S FINALLY HAPPENED
YOU CAN'T HURT ME ANY MORE
THERES NO MORE PAIN INSIDE ME
FOR ALL MY BLOOD IS ON THE FLOOR

▲

I'VE SEEN TOO MUCH

I've seen enough to know
I've seen too much
I've felt the gruling pain
of your unwanted touch.

Its amazing you can reach me
On that pedastal you stand
But the only view I see
Is the back of your strong hand.

It used to be an accident
And appologies youd bleed
Now to tame that hunger
On my pane you always feed.

It's gone much further
My bruses arent enough
My friends don't even ask
They know I'll always bluff.

Well it's finally happened
You cant hurt me anymore
Theres no more pain inside me
For all my blood is on the floor.

M.H.

From *Drawing: A Link to Literacy*, compiled by Catherine Bates and Linda Shohet. The Centre for Literacy, Montréal, 1993. Reprinted with permission.

CAROL: No. No. There are people out there. *People* who came *here*. To know something they didn’t *know*. Who *came* here. To be helped. To be helped. So someone would *help* them. To *do* something. To *know* something. To get, what do they say? “To get on in the world.” How can I do that if I don’t, if I fail? But I don’t *understand*. I don’t *understand*. I don’t understand what anything means . . . and I walk around, from morning ‘til night with this one thought in my head. I’m *stupid*.

JOHN: No one thinks you’re stupid.

CAROL: No? what am I . . . ?

JOHN: I . . .

CAROL: . . . what am I, then?

JOHN: I think you’re angry. Many people are. I have a *telephone* call that I have to make. And an *appointment*, which is rather *pressing*; though I sympathize with your concerns and though I wish I had the time, this was not a previously scheduled meeting and I . . .

CAROL: . . . you think I’m nothing . . .

JOHN: . . . have an appointment with a *realtor*, and with my wife and . . .

CAROL: You think I’m stupid.

JOHN: No, I certainly don’t.

CAROL: You said it.

JOHN: No. I did not.

CAROL: You did.

JOHN: When?

CAROL: . . . you . . .

JOHN: No. I never did, nor never would say that to a student, and . . .

CAROL: You said, "What can that mean?" (Pause) "What can that mean? . . .(Pause)

JOHN: . . . and what did that mean to you . . .?

CAROL: That meant I'm stupid. And I'll never learn. That's what that meant. And you're right.

JOHN: . . . I . . .

CAROL: But then. But then, what am I doing here . . .?

JOHN: . . . if you thought that I . . .

CAROL: . . . when nobody wants me, and . . .

JOHN: . . . if you interpreted . . .

CAROL: Nobody *tells* me anything. And I sit here . . . in the *corner*. In the *back*. And everybody's talking about "this" all the time. And "concepts: and "percepts" and, and, and, and, and, WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? And I read your book. And they said, "Fine, go in that class." Because you talked about responsibility to the young. I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT MEANS AND I'M FAILING . . .

From *Oleanna: A Play* by David Mamet. Copyright © 1992 by David Mamet.
Reprinted by permission of Pantheon Books, a division of Random House, Inc.

Silence and Voice: Interview Questions

1. When you look over your life, what comes to mind when you think of being silenced? When you think of having had a voice?

2. Looking back on your growing up, what were the "rules" in your family about who spoke and who listened?

3. What experience stands out for you where you felt quite silenced in school?

4. What experience stands out for you in school where you really felt you had a voice?

5. How do you think other people would describe you as a listener?

6. Are there certain situations or certain kinds of people that cause you problems as a listener?

7. How do your experiences of voice and silence relate to your feelings about yourself as a knower?

8. Think about your home, neighbourhood, or the place where you work – somewhere you spend time with other people. What are some of the changes that might make these places more likely to be spaces where everyone would feel voiced?

Questions adapted from *Women's Ways of Knowing* by Mary Belenky et al, and from Nancy Goldberger's current research at the Fielding Institute, Santa Barbara, California.
Used with permission.

TV Observations

For the next week, take some time to watch six different kinds of TV shows and notice the women who read the news or play the parts. Keep track of any things you notice about these different kinds of programs.

On a newscast (such as "The Journal" or the local news):

In a commercial for cars:

In a commercial for soap:

In a soap opera (such as "General Hospital"):

In a sitcom (such as "Roseanne"):

In a drama (such as "ER" or "North of 60"):

In a talk show (such as "Oprah"):

13. Women of Courage: Herstory

by *Anne Moore* and the *Women's Group of Action Read*

ANNE MOORE and the Women's Group of Action Read in Guelph, Ontario have been working together for the last four years. In 1995 we published Growing Bolder: A Workbook on Growing Older *and* Herstory for Women in Literacy Programs. *This chapter is adapted from that book. The group members that helped to write the workbook were: Shirley Almack, Bela Banerjee, Lucy Carere, Bonnie Ford, Rosemary Meadus and Annette Priest.*

photo: Ben Barclay

Introduction

This chapter came out of some themes that developed over the four years that the group worked together. We felt strongly that we wanted to share what we were finding out about women from the past. The women in the group thought that women at any level would find this material interesting. As we did our research we found that it made us feel differently about who we were and what we were struggling with in our daily lives.

The women felt most comfortable with a workbook format that spoke directly to learners. We wanted the book to be handled by learners themselves, and not to be a resource book only for teachers and facilitators. While we talked and wrote, we were thinking of the women who choose not to be part of a group, or have not got that option, and women in many community programs. And we were thinking of small women's groups, although there are not many around.

We wanted our book to be as useful as possible. The entire chapter (except for the photos on pages 357 – 359) is a student handout, and may be reproduced for educational purposes. It is taken from our book *Growing Bolder*. We invite you to adapt this material in any way necessary to make it work in your situation.

With basic learners most of the chapter can be done orally. The tutor or learner can read the material out loud, discuss it and use the questions for writing exercises. The questions were written with the hopes that there would be a good discussion first. We hope you do not shy away from this material because it is too advanced. We found that women at any level enjoyed the stories of other women and enjoyed thinking about new ideas.

If you work in a class, you could use the chapter in several ways, with some or all of the learners in the class. If the reading level seems right for them, you might give it to one or two learners to work on independently, checking on them as needed for discussion of the ideas. These learners may want to present their writings to the whole class, and may want to involve the rest of the class in some of the activities.

The material best lends itself to a small mixed-level group. The group can read the text out loud, discuss it together, then pair off to support each other in the writing exercises. If the group is ready for it, they can be invited to do their own research on local women's stories and herstory. It may lead to interviewing the elders of your communities, taking a field trip or publishing a book. The possibilities are endless. We know because this is how our book got written!

One last note: The exercises at the beginning of the chapter were sparked by one of the women seeing a movie about Columbus, where he was portrayed as the father/discoverer of a new land. This began months of discussion and research on ideas of First Nations' rights, racism, gender and oppression. We discovered that Columbus is important because he helps to tie all these themes together very clearly. Two resources on Columbus listed at the end of this chapter were especially helpful. 1996 marks the 500th anniversary of Cabot's arrival on our eastern shores. Many ceremonies, theatrical productions and re-enactments are planned. There may be material in these events to spark similar ideas. Please feel free to expand the discussion.

Note: Pages 361 – 388 may be reproduced for educational purposes.

photo: Deborah Barndt, Silverlight

Augusta Evans

photo: Robet Keziere

From *The Days of Augusta*, edited by Jean E. Speare. Douglas & McIntyre 1992. Used by permission.

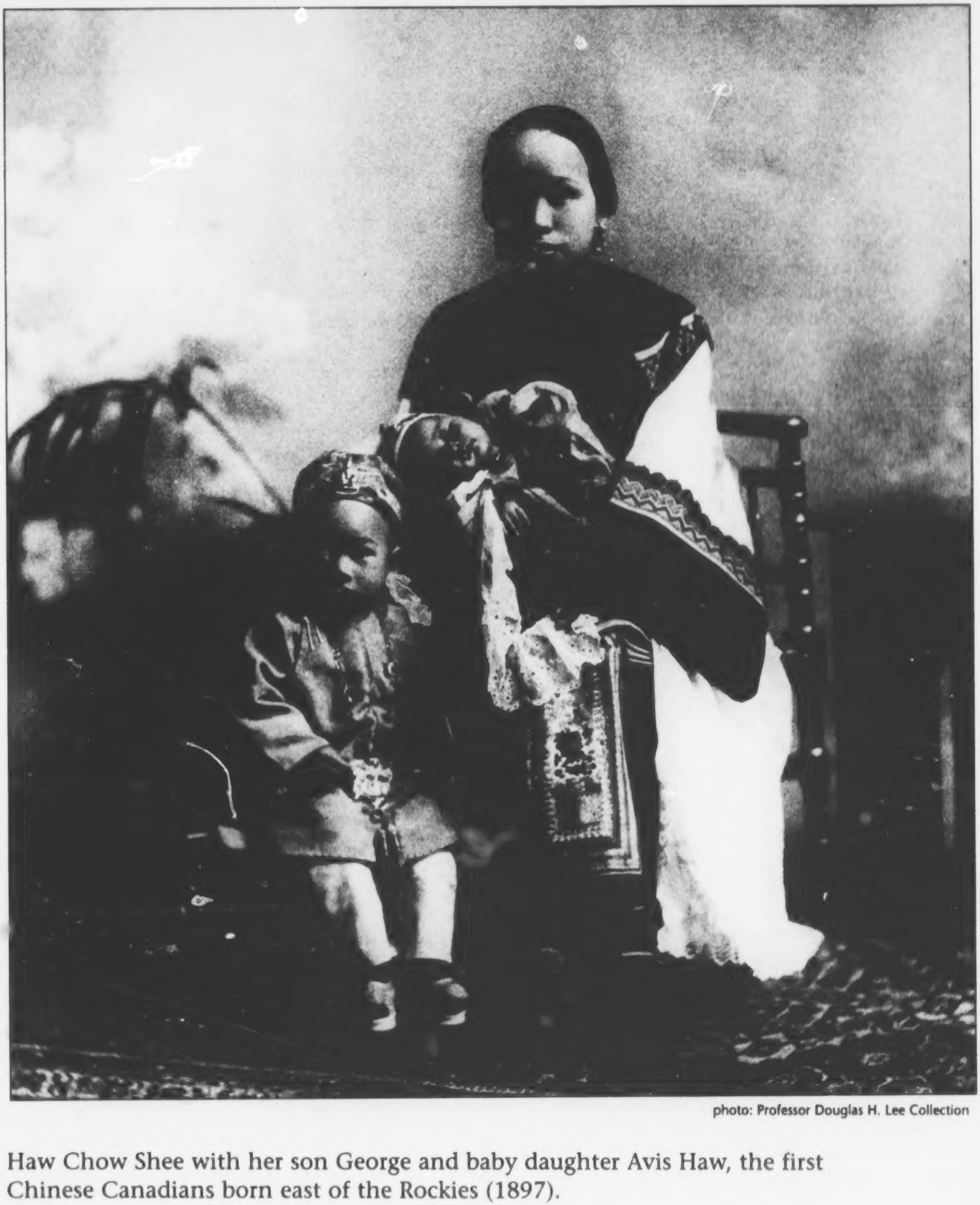

photo: Professor Douglas H. Lee Collection

Haw Chow Shee with her son George and baby daughter Avis Haw, the first Chinese Canadians born east of the Rockies (1897).

Resources

For a more complete list of resources, see *Growing Bolder: A Workbook on Growing Older and Herstory for Women in Literacy Programs* by Anne Moore and the Women's Group of Action Read. (See the Bibliography for complete listings.)

Bigelow, Bill, et al, eds. *Rethinking Columbus: Teaching about the 500th Anniversary of Columbus' Arrival in America.*
Bigelow, Bill, et al, eds. *Rethinking Our Classrooms: Teaching for Equity and Social Justice*
Johnson, E. Pauline. *Flint and Feather*
Kuczma, Carmen, ed. *500 Years and Beyond: A Teacher's Resource Guide*
Merritt, Susan E. *Her Story: Women from Canada's Past*
Moore, Anne and the Women's Group of Action Read. *Growing Bolder: A Workbook on Growing Older and on Herstory for Adult Women in Literacy Programs*
Neale, Gladys E. ed. *Voices 3: Canadians Who Made a Difference*
Neale, Gladys E. ed. *Voices from Canada's Past: Book One*
Neale, Gladys E. ed. *Voices from Canada's Past: Book Two*
Sadlier, Rosemary. *Leading the Way: Black Women in Canada*
Staton, Pat and Paula Bourne. *Claiming Women's Lives: History and Contemporary Studies*
Willoughby, Brenda. *Pauline Johnson*

Other Resources

We've Got a Story to Tell: Putting Oral History on Video. By Storylinks. It is a friendly video about making oral history videos.

Women's History Month. For free information, contact the Status of Women Canada, Communications Directorate, 360 Albert Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 1C3. Call (613) 995-3817 or fax (613) 943-2386.

The National Film Board. To buy films or videos from the NFB, or for information about NFB products, call 1 800 267-7710. To rent NFB films and videos, contact your local library.

Part One: Herstory

Much of history has been written as if women were not there. Women's journals and letters were thrown out because people thought their stories were not important. It seems as if only men made history.

History is often taught as though wars, soldiers, explorers, and kings were all that mattered. Most of the well-known people from history were rich, powerful white men.

What happened to the women? What were their lives like?

Look at the first picture on page 357. It is a picture of one famous man from history with a First Nations woman at his feet. Do you know what his name is? Do you know what her name is?

What are your first feelings when you look at this picture?

____

____

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The man's name is Christopher Columbus and the woman is simply called a native woman. She seems to have no name.

History books tell us all about Columbus's life and how he "discovered" America. Those same books tell us almost nothing about the people who were living in America before Columbus came.

Look at the picture. What do you think he is thinking?
What is she thinking?

First Nations Woman: ______________________________

____

____

Columbus: ____________________________________

____

Whether women were struggling for the right to vote, to win freedom from slavery, or to make sure there was food for their children, they – our mothers, grandmothers, and their mothers – deserve to have their stories told and their names remembered.

Women are taking a new look at history and coming up with a different and more complete story of what happened. Some women are calling it "herstory" since it is no longer just "his - story."

First Nations Women

Look at the photo of Augusta Evans on page 358.

First Nations women have often been left out of Canada's history. These women played an important role within their own nations. Many nations had women elders guiding the chiefs in their decisions. Women elders were important to the spiritual life of the people. But, when First Nations women have been written about in history, these roles were often left out.

The stories of these women were known only if their lives happened to cross with those of the settlers or explorers. Many First Nations women were captured by the early white explorers, or were taken as wives. Sometimes these women were left to take care of their children by themselves when the men returned to Europe or took a different wife. First Nations women were also used to guide explorers to places the explorer would claim he found all by himself. Some of the first photographers took pictures of these women without recording their names. Usually the name of her tribe or nation would be noted below the photo, but that was all.

The stories of these women are just coming to light now. But the stories of many brave and talented women have been lost forever.

Women Settlers

Look at the picture of Haw Chow Shee on page 359.

When history books talk about women settlers, they often talk about English women, but women from many different backgrounds lived in Canada before the year 1900.

Gudrid, a Viking woman, visited Canada in 1007, long before Columbus was even born. Gudrid helped to start a settlement in Labrador in the year 1007.

The first Black person came to Canada in 1608. Settlements of Blacks began to spring up in the late 1700s. About 100 years later, Poles, Hungarians, Ukrainians, Jews, and Mennonites began to settle in Ontario and Western Canada. Workers were brought in from Italy and China in the 1880s to build the railway. Women were there too, making homes, having children, and keeping the fires burning.

Canada's history is the history of women and men from many different backgrounds, cultures, religions, and language groups.

Why do you think many history books only told the story of white men?

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____

In this chapter we will look at three famous women from Canada's past. Then we will look at women from our personal past.

Herstory or History?

Think of a time in the past. Try to imagine how women and men may have seen things differently. Draw a cartoon called Herstory and draw another one called History. Show the different ways the man and the woman saw things. Write their thoughts or what they say above each character:

- Show how a man on Columbus's ship and a First Nations woman in America might think differently about Columbus coming to America.
- Show what a pioneer woman and man might be thinking when she finds out she is pregnant for the fourth time.
- Show what men and women may have thought when women got the vote.

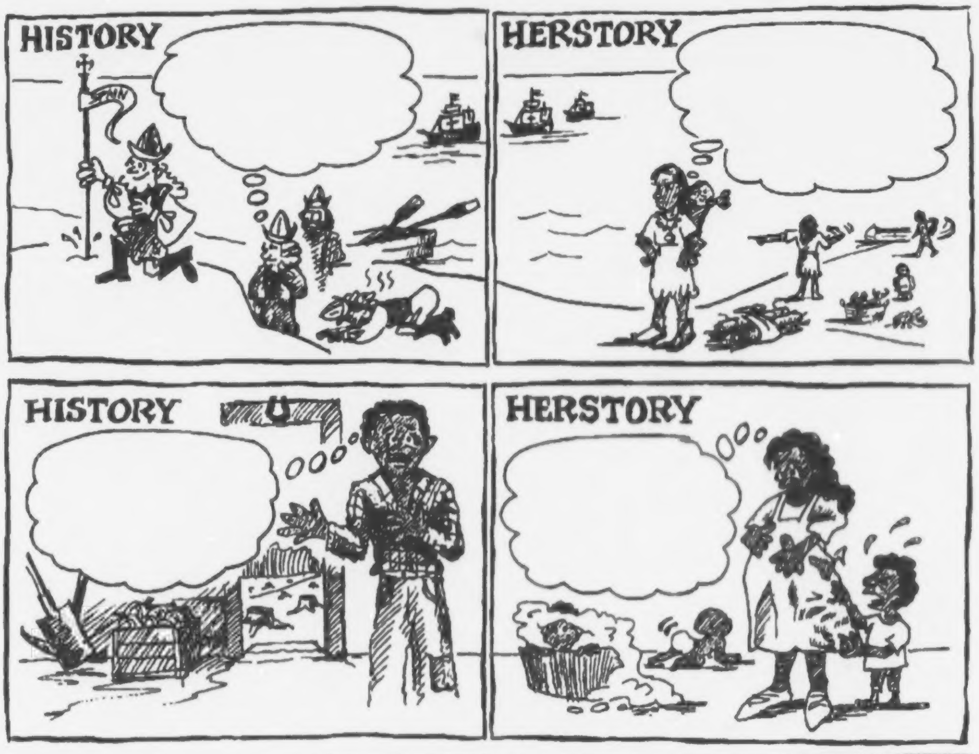

illustration: Moon Joyce

One Woman's Feelings about the Past

This poem tells us how one woman felt about history. The writer and title are unknown. Read it and see if you agree:

Our history has been
stolen from us.
Our heroes died in
childbirth, from
peritonitis
overwork
oppression
from bottled up rage.
Our geniuses were
never taught to
read or write.
We must find our
past adequate
to our ambitions.
We must create a
future adequate
to our needs.

Words to Know

rage — anger
geniuses — people with special abilities
peritonitis — an infection of the lining of the abdomen
oppression — when a person or group of people is treated unfairly or with cruelty
adequate — good enough
ambitions — our hopes and dreams for our lives
create — to make

What Do You Think?

1. What is this poem saying?

2. How does the writer feel? Why does she feel this way?

3. Why didn't women get as much education as men in the past?

Try writing this poem in your own words and give it a title.

Here is how one woman rewrote the poem in her own words:

The Feelings of Me

by Isabelle Munroe

My future was stolen from me.
My mother died from cancer to save us.
I died inside because I never got what I wanted.
By the time I was seven,
My chances were taken away from me.
I was taken out of school to do housework
My family used me for a slave
I was taken to look after my sister's children
just like a mother.
I lost my hope
I thought I was nothing
I was never taught to read or write
I am fighting for my self
I am fighting for people that can't read
I am fighting for a future.

What Do You Think?

Talk and write about these questions:

1. What was the difference between the opportunities that were offered to women and men in the past? How did this make their lives different?

2. How would history have looked if women had been offered the same opportunities as men? How would things be different for us today?

Women from Our Past

Here are the stories of three women from Canada's past. These women broke new ground and made changes that have shaped our thinking today. All of these women lived in Ontario for some part of their lives. When we were choosing the stories of women from history, most of the stories we found were women who lived in Ontario. This is partly because this is where we live and partly because this is where most people settled in the early days of Canada. We hope that you will discover the stories of women who lived in your region as you do the exercises that follow these women's stories.

As you read through the stories, ask yourself which woman you relate to the most. After the stories you will find some writing ideas.

Mary Ann Shadd (1823-1893)

Mary Ann Shadd was born free in the United States when most Afro-American people were still slaves. She was taught by Quakers for six years. She moved to Windsor, Ontario to set up a private school for the large numbers of escaped slaves and their children who were living there. In those days Blacks were not allowed to go to public schools in Canada. She believed that teaching freed slaves to read and to budget money was the best work she could do. Her students were aged 4 to 45 years.

Mary Ann Shadd started a newspaper called *The Provincial Freeman* to let others know about the anti-slavery movement and to give a voice to the Black people in Canada. She put the paper under a man's name, since it was unheard of for a woman to own a newspaper. The newspaper helped slaves in the States find out about Canada so they would know where to escape to, if they chose.

Later in life, Mary Ann returned to the United States where she studied law and became the first Black woman to get her law degree. As a lawyer, she often gave her services to the poor for free. She worked hard all of her life to improve the lives of Black people in Canada and the United States.

The Shadd family still lives in southern Ontario and in the United States.

National Archives of Canada. Photo # C29977

Mary Ann Shadd: "I would rather wear out than rust out."

From the Story

1. What did Mary Ann Shadd do to help escaped slaves living in Ontario?

____

____

____

2. Why did she think it was important for Black people to have their own newspaper?

____

____

Mary Ann Shadd did a lot of different things in her life.
Circle the words that describe the work she did:

newspaper publisher
lawyer
baker
teacher
editor
singer
doctor
writer
nurse

Root Words: Each of these words has a smaller word inside of it called the root word. **Underline** the root word, then **write a sentence** using the root word.

1. lawyer ____
2. baker ____
3. editor ____
4. newspaper ____
5. teacher ____
6. writer ____

Slavery in Canada

There was slavery in Canada. On August 1, 1834, Lord Simcoe passed a bill that said it was no longer legal to import slaves to Upper Canada (Ontario). The law also freed children of slaves by their 25th birthday. After this it became widely known among slaves in the States, that Canada was a place where they could live and be free.

To read more about Mary Ann look for:
Her Story: Women from Canada's Past by Susan Merritt
Leading the Way: Black Women in Canada by Rosemary Sadlier

Pauline Johnson

Archives of Ontario Photo #5898

Pauline Johnson (1861-1913)

Pauline Johnson was a Metis born in 1861 on the Six Nations Reserve in Brantford, Ontario. Her Mohawk name was Tekahionwake. Pauline's father was a Mohawk Chief and her mother was English. She grew up in an interesting home where she lived with both First Nations and English traditions. She wrote poetry at an early age. When her father died she had to find a way to support herself so she started selling her poetry. One night she was invited to read her poetry in front of an audience. She read "A Cry from an Indian Wife." The audience was thrilled. She quickly became known for her readings and was sent to England several times to entertain British artists and nobility.

Pauline travelled back and forth across Canada by herself, reading poetry in First Nations villages and small towns. Pauline loved nature and enjoyed her travels through Canada where she often camped and canoed.

She was well loved for her poems and songs which entertained and taught respect for First Nations people. After being on the road for fourteen years, she decided to settle down in Vancouver. She became ill and died two years later. She was very poor when she died. During her life she made no more than $500 from the sale of her poetry. There is a monument to her in Stanley Park in Vancouver.

A Cry from an Indian Wife

My forest brave, my Red-skin love farewell;
We may not meet tomorrow; who can tell
What mighty ills befall our little band,
Or what you'll suffer from the white man's hand?

• • •

Go forth, nor bend to greed of white men's hand,
By right, by birth we Indians own these lands,
Though starved, crushed, plundered, lies our nation low . . .
Perhaps the white man's God has willed it so.

(A part of her poem from the book *Flint and Feather.*)

What Do You Think?

1. How did Pauline try to spread respect for First Nations people?

2. Do you know about any woman doing this kind of work now for First Nations people or for other groups? Write about her.

Find the missing words in the story:

1. Pauline's Mohawk name was ______________________.

2. Her father was______________ and her mother was ______________.

3. She wrote ________________ at an early age.

4. She was invited to ___________________ to read her poetry.

5. She travelled across Canada for _________________ years.

6. When she died she was very ________________.

7. She made no more than $500 from her _____________in her life.

Figuring Out the Past

1. How many years ago was Pauline born? ____________________
(**Subtract** the year she was born from the year now.)

2. How old was Pauline when she died? ______________________
(**Subtract** the year of her birth from the year of her death.)

3. Pauline moved to Vancouver two years before she died. How old was she when she moved to Vancouver? ____________________________
(**Subtract** two years from her age when she died.)

If you want to read more about Pauline look for:
Her Story: Women from Canada's Past by Susan Merritt
Flint and Feather: The Complete Poems of E. Pauline Johnson
Pauline Johnson by Brenda Willoughby

Nellie McClung

National Archives of Canada photo #C27674

Nellie McClung (1873-1951)

When Nellie McClung was asked if she believed that woman's place was in the home, she said,

"Yes I do, and so is father's – but not twenty-four hours a day for either of them. Woman's duty lies not only in rearing of children but also in the world into which those children must some day enter."

Nellie McClung was very young when her family moved from Ontario to Manitoba. Nellie loved writing poetry and reading. By the time she was seventeen, she was in charge of a one-room school house. While teaching school, Nellie wrote novels and stories. She married and had five children. Nellie joined the Temperance Movement, which wanted to ban alcohol so that men would stop drinking. Nellie saw how women and children suffered when men spent their money and time drinking.

Nellie became known as a writer and a public speaker and was known to charm audiences with her personality even though they didn't always agree with what she said. Nellie and the women in the Temperance Movement believed that if women had the right to vote they would quickly do away with alcohol. So Nellie became a suffragette and joined the fight to give women the right to vote.

The government loved to ignore what the suffragettes were saying, so the women tried to win support by being funny. They set up a mock government and invited the public to hear what women would say if men had to ask for the right to vote. Nellie played the premier of Manitoba and used the same words that he had used when she said, "Politics unsettle men, and this will mean unpaid bills, broken furniture, broken vows and divorce. Men's place is on the farm." The suffragettes had people laughing and won public support for their cause.

In 1916, after years of fighting, women won the right to vote in Manitoba and Alberta, where Nellie then lived. "Old Nell" then joined a struggle to make women "persons" in the eye of the law so that they could hold a seat in the Senate. Nellie and the four other women who fought with her won again. Nellie remained active and vocal until she died.

Match the words with the meaning by drawing a line between them:

temperance	when people get together for a special goal
suffrage	where elected people sit in government
suffragette	the right to vote
movement	when people want alcohol banned
Parliament	a woman who fights for the right to vote

From the Story

1. Why did Nellie want to stop men from drinking?

____

____

____

2. What changes did Nellie help to make that affect our lives today?

____

____

____

3. How did the suffragettes win people to their side?

____

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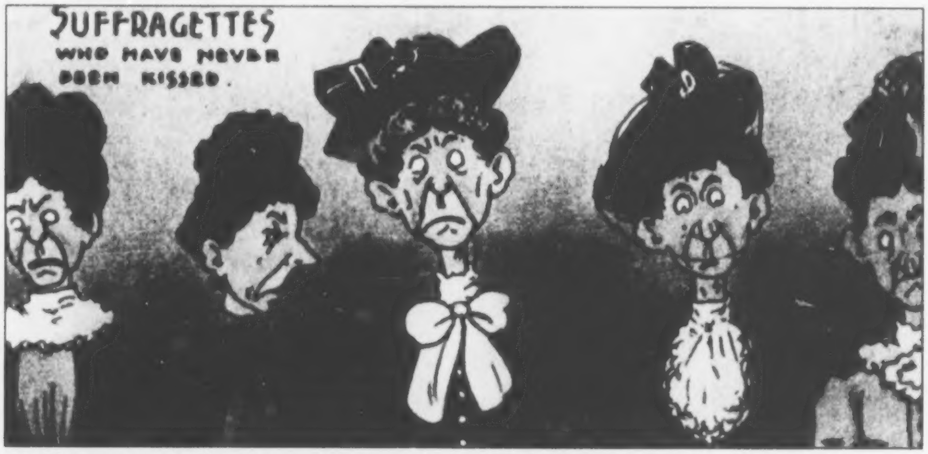
SUFFRAGETTES
WHO HAVE NEVER
BEEN KISSED.

Suffragettes Who Have Never Been Kissed

All Women?

When it is said that on May 24th, 1918, Canadian women were given the vote, it does not mean all women.

Women with Chinese, Japanese, South Asian, Inuit and Status Indian backgrounds were not allowed to vote until between 1947 and 1960.

Why do you think these women were treated differently from white women?

____

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First Nations people were allowed to vote before the 1960s if they agreed to give up their status as Indian people. This meant that they would lose all their rights under the Indian Act, their status as Indians, their land, everything. In 1960, the law was changed and they were finally allowed to vote without losing their rights.

What about Your Province?

Each province gave women the right to vote provincially in different years.

Manitoba	1916
Saskatchewan	1916
Alberta	1916
British Columbia	1917
Ontario	1917
Nova Scotia	1918
New Brunswick	1919
Prince Edward Island	1922
Newfoundland	1925
Quebec	1940

Find out more about how the vote was won in your province. When did women win the vote in your province? How did it happen? Who were some of the women who made it happen?

You Mustn't Ask to Vote

by L. Case Russel

You may be our close companion
Share our trouble, ease our pain.
You may bear the servant's burden
(But without the servant's gain;)
You may scrub and cook and iron
Sew the buttons on our coat,
But as men we must protect you –
You are far too frail to vote.

You may toil behind our counters,
In our factories you may slave
You are welcome in the sweatshop
From the cradle to the grave.
If you err, altho' a woman
You may dangle from the throat
But our chivalry is outraged
If you soil your hands to vote.

This poem was printed in the *Globe and Mail* on September 28, 1912. Do you think the writer was a man or a woman? Why do you think she or he wrote the poem?

If you want to read more about Nellie look for:

Her Story: Women from Canada's Past by Susan Merritt
Voices From Canada's Past: Book One edited by Gladys Neale

Women Worth Writing About

1. What do these three women have in common?

2. Do you think you share anything with these women?

3. Which woman do you feel most strongly about? Why?

4. In what ways are you like that woman?

5. What would it take for you to do what she did?

6. If you did one thing that would make you famous, what would it be?

Herstory Writing Ideas

Write a poem about the woman you feel most strongly about. You could begin each line with the word "Because . . . "Tell us about what she did, why she was important, why you chose her, and how you relate to her.

Example: Because she cared so much about women . . .

Write a story or poem as if you were her. Tell us what it felt like to do what you did. You can write down how you would imagine she felt.

Example: "I felt nervous speaking in front of so many people, but I knew I was doing the right thing . . ."

Pretend she is coming to visit you in your life now. Write her to prepare her for what life is like now. What is different, better, or worse for people today?

Example: Dear Mary Ann Shadd, I'm glad you can come to visit. I think you will be happy to see that some things have changed for the better....I think it will upset you to know...."

Write a thank-you letter to one woman from history. Thank her for something she did or tried to do. Tell her the difference it made to your life.

Example:

Date____________________

Dear___________________,

I just wanted to say thank you for ______________________________________

____

____

____

Yours sincerely,

Write a Herstory Haiku. Find some traditional Haiku and read them out loud to get a feeling for them. Now write your own. Use a woman's name for the first line. For the second line say what she was trying to do. In the third line say something about how she makes you feel.

For example:

Mary Ann Shadd
Working hard to make freedom count
Proud to be a black woman.

Find out the birthday of your favourite woman from history. On her birthday talk or write about the things she did and why you admire her.

Do a collage of the things she did, or the times she lived in. You could photocopy pictures from books. Write in some key words to describe her life.

Have a herstory party. In our group we spent a day dressed as women from history. We read as much as we could find on each of our women and agreed to dress up as the woman we chose on the same day. We had tea together and told the group about what she did in her life. Then we read the writing we did about her out loud. Here is a picture of us. It was fun!

photo credit: Ben Barclay

left to right: Bela Banerjee as Indira Ghandi, Bonnie Ford as Agnes MacPhail, Shirley Almack as Joan of Arc, Annette Priest as Laura Secord

Bonnie Ford, one woman in our group, chose to write about Agnes MacPhail, the first woman elected to Parliament. Agnes went to Ottawa to take her seat in 1921. Here is what Bonnie wrote:

A Famous Lady

by Bonnie Ford

I think Agnes MacPhail had magic in her voice,
When men talked back she put them in their place.
When she spoke, people listened
and they woke up.
She cared for farm people,
She care for people in prisons,
She also cared about women,
And that is why I relate to her.

When I was a child I went with my dad to farm meetings,
I heard her name.
She had the power to move things, to get things for farmers.
I have that power too, but it scares me.
I wonder if she was scared like me?

Find Out about Women from Your Province

Find out about a woman from your area. There may be a woman or a group of women from your area that has done something remarkable in the past who should not be forgotten. If you do not know of anyone, ask at the local library or museum. Or talk to some of the older people.

How much can you find out about her? Can you find any pictures?

- What is her name?
- When was she born?
- When did she die?
- What did she do that was special?

Help to make her story part of your local herstory!

Other Things You Can Do to Celebrate Herstory

Watch a Video about Women from the Past. Have a film night at your program. The National Film Board has a whole list of films on women from the past. You may also find one at your local video store. Phone numbers for the NFB are at the end of this chapter.

Write a Play. Write a short play about one day in the life of a woman from history. You might choose the day the vote was won for women, or the day Pauline Johnson first read her poetry in front of a crowd. You could perform it for others during October, Women's History Month.

Make a Herstory Display. October is Women's History Month in Canada. Ask your library or program to order some books about women from the past and make a display every October. Or make a display about your favourite woman from history to share with the rest of the program.

At the end of the chapter there is an address to get free information about Women's History Month.

Visit the Local Museum. Plan a trip to your local museum. Call ahead for someone to give you a tour. Ask to see what they have about women from the past. Think about whose lives are being shown: Is the exhibit about First Nations women, poor women, wealthy women, and women of colour or was it mostly about what men did? Ask your tour guide how they chose what went into the collection.

After your visit, write down what the museum told you about women from the past. If there was something or someone missing, write a letter to the museum and tell them. They like to hear what people think.

Part Two: Your Story Is Herstory Too!

Our stories and the stories of our mothers and grandmothers are part of herstory, too. Many of us do not know much about our own pasts. Here are some things you can do to get in touch with your past. You might choose to do one of them or all of them.

Make a Family Tree

Photocopy the tree on the next page. Write in your family members' names and the dates they were born and died. Photocopy pictures of your family and glue them on. With this tree you can go back four generations. If you know more than that, you will have to make your own tree. If you find some interesting stories about their lives, write them down.

You may not be comfortable talking about your family. If this is true please skip this exercise, or talk about only the family that you are comfortable with, or build your own family out of friends and neighbours.

Answer these questions:

1. Who is the oldest living member of your family and how old is this person?

2. What is the name and date of birth of the oldest woman in your tree?

3. Do you feel a special fondness for one family member? Which one and why?

My Family Tree

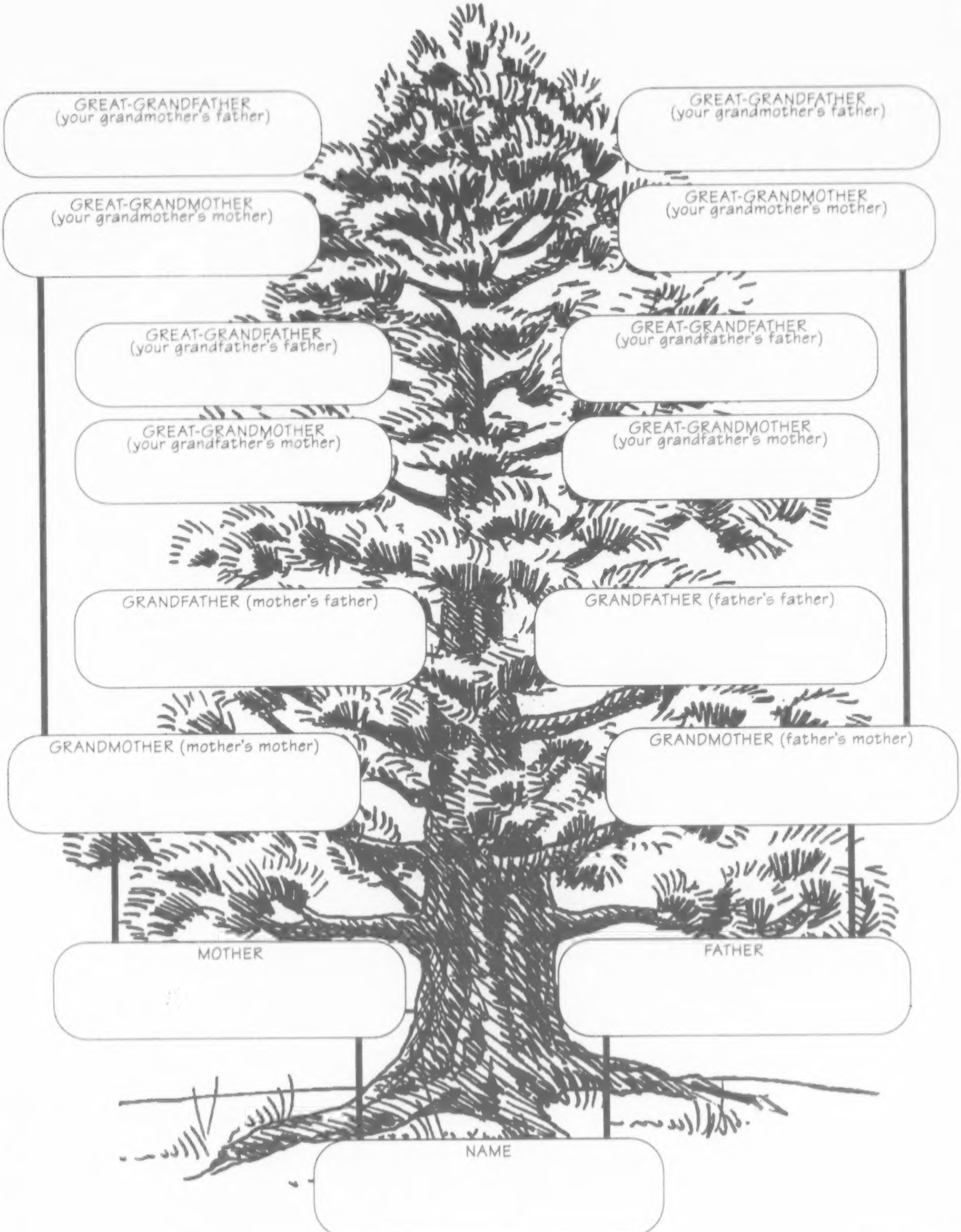
GREAT-GRANDFATHER (your grandmother's father)
GREAT-GRANDFATHER (your grandmother's father)
GREAT-GRANDMOTHER (your grandmother's mother)
GREAT-GRANDMOTHER (your grandmother's mother)
GREAT-GRANDFATHER (your grandfather's father)
GREAT-GRANDFATHER (your grandfather's father)
GREAT-GRANDMOTHER (your grandfather's mother)
GREAT-GRANDMOTHER (your grandfather's mother)
GRANDFATHER (mother's father)
GRANDFATHER (father's father)
GRANDMOTHER (mother's mother)
GRANDMOTHER (father's mother)
MOTHER
FATHER
NAME

illustration: Moon Joyce

Write down the names of the women in your mother's line by filling in the blanks:

My name is ______________. I am the child of ____________________
(mother)

who was the daughter of ___________________,
(grandmother)

who was the daughter of ____________________.
(great-grandmother)

Find pictures of all of these women, photocopy them, and make a collage. You could add ribbon or lace, or words and poems and frame it.

Make a Herstory Quilt*

Quilts made of felt can be beautiful and colourful. They can tell one story or parts of many stories. If you are in a group, the quilt can be done by the whole group in a couple of meetings. If you are not in a group, you can make a banner with four or six squares to tell your story.

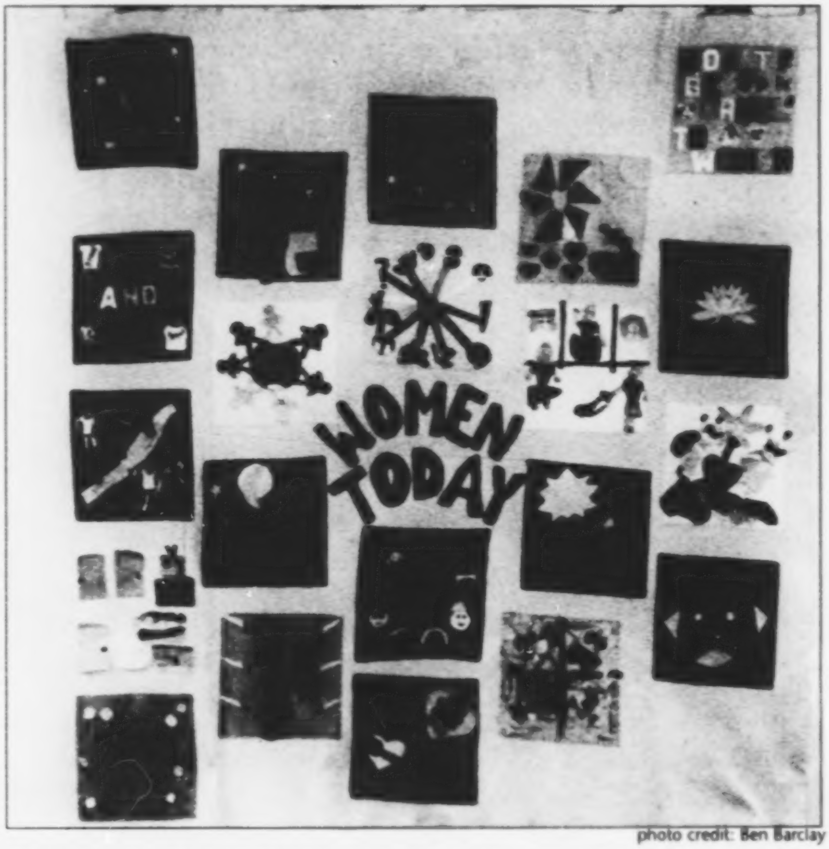

photo credit: Ben Barclay

Herstory quilt by the women of Action Read

Before You Start

You need fabric glue, bits of fabric, ribbon or felt for cutting up, squares of felt, a large piece of felt for the background, and scissors.

If you want the quilt to be sturdy, you might sew the pieces together after they have been glued.

1. Choose a theme for the quilt. Some ideas are: being a woman, special women from the past or present, the women in my family, what we would like to tell young girls about being women, or how my life is different from my grandmothers.

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*This exercise was adapted from work done by Storylinks of Ontario.

2. **Talk about the theme** as a group or with your tutor, until you have clear ideas about what each square will be about. Share the story of your square with one other person.
3. **Work on the squares** of felt, gluing on small pieces of felt to make a picture about your story. You can also use fabric, buttons, or paint.
4. **Glue all the squares** to the background piece and give it a title. (You may want to stitch the squares down with colourful thread.)
5. **Write** down the stories for each square and put them in a booklet to go with the quilt.
6. **Enjoy!**

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Loved, Honoured and Bruised. NFB. Gail Singer, director

Moving Mountains. NFB. Laura Sky, director

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Where Angels Dare. NFB. Shona Miko Rossel, director

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